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Great Expectations: Narratives of Second Generation Asian Indian American College Students about Academic Achievement and Related Intergenerational Communication

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Great Expectations: Narratives of Second Generation Asian Indian American College Students about Academic Achievement and Related Intergenerational Communication

By

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DEDICATION

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YOU are my Protector everywhere; why should I feel any fear or anxiety?

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PREFACE

In his memoir *In Hanuman's Hands*, best-selling Asian Indian American author Cheeni Rao (2009) writes of a time when he went to his mother after being expelled from college. His mother closed the door on him, saying, "I can do nothing more for you. You are now in Hanuman's Hands." Hanuman, who is part ape and part human, is a Hindu deity who symbolizes the eternal struggle of good against evil. Hanuman represents the good.

In a collection of stories about South Asian students, Asha Gupta, an Asian Indian American student, candidly reflects how deeply she has struggled with familial expectations. "My obsession with making my family proud and honoring my culture is at the crux of my struggles with identity. This worry extends to almost every aspect of my life" (Garrod & Kilkenny, 2007, p134-135). Such anxiety is not only generated by expectations of parents and family members; it is also a result of stereotypes rampant in higher education. Asian American students are often typecast as high achievers and more academically motivated than other students of color, such as African Americans (Garrod & Kilkenny, 2007).

The Namesake, the film based on a bestseller by Pulitzer prize winner Jhumpa Lahiri (2009), highlights the struggle of an Asian Indian American young man attempting to find a balance between his traditional upbringing and his modern surroundings. This story echoes sentiments commonly found in a host of narratives, including memoirs, fiction and biographies.

In the popular TV sitcom *Glee*, an Asian father tells Principal Figgins "my son got an A- in Chemistry. An A- is an Asian F." (Murphy, 2011). Later in the same episode, the Asian student tells his white friend that he received an A- on a paper. The friend gasps in shock and states, "Isn't that the Asian F?" further showcasing the stereotype in the minds of white students (Murphy, 2011).

In addition to these examples of Asian Indian American youth negotiating familial pressures in regard to academics, it is truly my own passion and experiences that drive my desire to research this topic. I immigrated to the United States at the age of 25. My children are second generation Asian Indian Americans and today they are the same age as the population I aim to research. I have watched them grow and navigate the "model minority" stereotype. I am fortunate that my children still talk to me freely about their academics and educational choices, though I am positive they hide many aspects of their personal lives from me. My son graduated with a bachelor's degree in Business and my daughter is pursuing Sociology as a sophomore in college. Each of them has experienced both extremes of the academic spectrum – great success and immense struggle.

Over the years I have listened to conversations at Asian Indian gatherings; I have heard stories from Asian Indian American children about their parents and I have heard the parents talk about their children. For roughly 10 years I coached a national academic competition named Destination Imagination (DI). DI is a creative problem-solving tournament that teaches children to think on their feet, encourages teamwork and consists of solving open-ended problems in theatrical and engineering areas. There were many Asian Indian American children on my team. I spent time listening to their stories about

interacting with their parents, particularly in regard to their academic performance. Over time I began to compare their narratives to what the white children narrated and noticed that there was a marked difference between the parental expectations of the two groups.

As time passed I realized that Asian Indian Americans in this program were outnumbering all the other ethnic groups, and soon my teams consisted mainly or solely of Asian Indian American children. I overheard some Asian Indian American children conversing at a tournament and two of them were lamenting that they really did not want to be in this "dumb program" but their parents were forcing them since it "looked very good on a college application" and it was "considered prestigious to win at DI."

In both past and present social settings, I have observed that the conversation is frequently dominated by discussion of children's electives, class ranks, school choices and co-curricular activities. I would often sit in the midst of these conversations and wonder how these children would tell their parents if they were ever failing a course or otherwise struggling in school / college. I observed this difficulty in my Destination Imagination team members, as some of them were perpetually scared of their parents. One student said that she was excited to go to college just to get away from her parents. Another child was not allowed to attend many DI meetings because he made a low A in one course. At the same time, there seemed to be an elitist attitude among the children, which was evident in remarks like "only stupid kids go to community college" or "only losers go to Alamo State University."

In addition to the pressures that Asian American Indian children face in academia, I have also often pondered about their parents. If they found out their children were

struggling with social or academic issues, to whom could they turn? Counseling is considered taboo amongst many members of their community. I was faced with a similar situation and I did not have a single person in my community that I felt comfortable speaking with. Surely there were others like me.

I started talking to people about the "model minority myth" but not many people in the Indian community wanted to discuss it. A very passionate discussion over lunch with my committee chair, Dr. Reddick, confirmed that this topic was indeed worth pursuing. The more I researched Asian Indian Americans and the model minority, the less I found. While there is limited literature on Asian Americans and South Asians there is even less so on Asian Indian Americans as they navigate the model minority myth within their families and in their communities.

Thus, my own experiences over the years have suggested that there is more behind the Asian Indian American success story than meets the eye. It is not a one-dimensional flat book. In reality, it is a pop-up, four-dimensional book that has multiple layers existing beneath the plain pages on top. My experience suggested that there existed, among the Asian Indian American community, a conflict with regards to academic achievement, academic choices and social choices. I wanted to investigate how widespread this was, how college students perceive this conflict and how they navigate the complicated arena of academic choices. When Asian Indian American students feel mental stress related to intergenerational conflict as a result of their academic performance, what are the strategies they employ to alleviate the stress? Do they turn to someone for help? If so, where do they go?

This study will tell the story of these students, their interactions with their parents and the strategies they employ to deal with the mental pressures and anxieties associated with expectations of being a model minority

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Abstract

Asian Indian Americans are a highly successful subset of Asian Americans. According to a 2012 Pew Center report, this population has the highest level of degree attainment among Asian Americans as well as the highest median income among Asian Americans ("The Rise of Asian Americans," 2012). However, there is a cloak of invisibility surrounding this population. There is little research on how second-generation Asian Indian Americans navigate the expectations of academic excellence and cultural adherence in their relationships with their first-generation parents. There is limited knowledge and understanding of this population that is burdened by family expectations, community expectations, institutional expectations, and their own self-expectations of academic excellence. The paucity of research on this population creates the invisible minority where students' needs may be ignored based on unfounded assumptions on part of the community and the institution.

This phenomenological study adds to the sparse literature on Asian Indian Americans by exploring the intergenerational relationships of Asian Indian American undergraduate students in a narrowly focused area of academic choices and academic performance. This study examined students' perceptions of the communication between first-generation parents and second-generation children who are currently enrolled at Southern State University. Further, this study examined the stress generated by the intergenerational relationships and the coping strategies employed by the students for dealing with the aforementioned stress.

Findings from this study indicate that first-generation parents stress academic excellence and enrollment in certain majors based on their own experiences as new immigrants as well as to uphold the honor and prestige of the family. While the expectations of academic excellence from parents create stress for the students, the students remain grateful to their parents for instilling such values in them. However, the findings reveal that students felt stress from the expectation of excellence from the community, family, and institution to perform well. The findings of varying levels of intergenerational issues suggest that the parent-child relationships in this population were complex and non-linear.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

> Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill-will.
>
> – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

The term Asian American refers broadly to all people born on, or tracing their roots to, the Asian continent, including immigrants from China, India, Vietnam, Japan and Pakistan, to list only a few countries (Kitano, 1981). This larger group consists of many cultures, languages, religions, ethnicities and national origins (Atri & Sharma, 2006). According to the 2010 Census, Asian Indian Americans are the second largest Asian group in the U.S. trailing Chinese Americans ("Population Profile of the United States," 2010). Since the 1965 Hart-Cellar immigration act, many well-educated, professional Asian Indians have immigrated to the United States (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Takaki, 1998). Asian Indian Americans are considered "high status migrants" with a net worth of more than $100 billion ("Indian Americans – A Story of Achievement," ; Varma, 2004).

Asian Americans, as a group, have achieved recognition on three stages – academic, professional, and political. In the academic world, Asian Americans have carved a name for themselves. Asian Americans scored higher than all other minorities and Whites on the 2011 SAT. The average combined score for Asian Americans was

1623 whereas it was 1581 for Whites, 1360 for Hispanics, and 976 for Blacks ("2011 College-Bound Seniors Total Group Profile Report," 2011). The numbers of Asian Americans at Ivy League schools and high-ranking public universities is disproportionate compared to the overall Asian American population. While Asian Americans comprise only five percent of the US population, they make up forty percent of the student body at California Institute of Technology, and almost fifty percent of the student body at The University of California locations at Berkeley, Irvine, and Los Angeles (Ghosh, 2010). Asian Americans have claimed discrimination in Ivy League admissions where schools have chosen to limit the numbers of this student population much like they limited Jewish students in the 1930s and 1940s (Ghosh, 2010). In spite of these claims, the numbers of Asian American students remain high at the top elite private universities. Quoting Kara Miller of Babson College, Ghosh (2010) reports "Yale's class of 2013 is 15.5 percent Asian American, compared with 16.1 percent at Dartmouth, 19.1 percent at Harvard and 17.6 percent at Princeton" (para 20). Adding to the public perception of Asians as the model minority, Asian Indian Americans have won accolades at prestigious, high-profile championships such as the Scripps National Spelling Bee. The winner of nine out of the last thirteen Scripps National spelling bee contests was an Asian Indian American ("Champions and Their Winning Words," 2011; Guerrero, 2010).

Such statistics might lead one to believe that Asian Indian Americans appear to be the great American success story. However, upon closer scrutiny, the Asian Indian American story (and Asian American story overall) is not at all simple, becoming

increasingly complex, far more varied and nuanced than most of us think. The model minority stereotype, rather than being helpful for the Asian American community, tends to silence and render invisible the complexity of the Asian American community. It also isolates the Asian American community from other communities of color because of the subtext of the stereotype-that the notion of "model" minority presumes that something is wrong with other (non-model) minorities. And in educational contexts, it regrettably leads many educators to make broad, uninformed assumptions about all Asian American students and, in this way, overlooks the individual needs of students.

Asian Indian Americans, along with their counterparts from Southeast and East Asia, are often labeled the model minority (Sakamato, Goyette, & Kim, 2009; Sun, 1999). Asian Indian Americans, by virtue of their success within the Asian American population, might even be considered a model minority within the model minority (Atri & Sharma, 2006; Garrod & Kilkenny, 2007; Wadhwa, Saxenian, Rissing, & Gereffi, 2007). Although the model minority label appears to be an honor on the surface it hides many dangers beneath. First and foremost, it serves to drive a wedge between Asian Indian Americans and other minorities such as African-American and Hispanics (Chou, 2008; S. S. Lee, 2010), limiting the possibility of pan-ethnic coalition building. Second, there is an intense pressure on students to live up to this model minority label. Parents, the Asian Indian community, the university, and peers all contribute to these pressures with direct and indirect pressures and assumptions. These are the pressures to succeed academically, and the assumption that students in the Asian Indian American community

need no special services due to the impression that they are the model minority and, thus, well-adjusted (Atri & Sharma, 2006; Chu, 2001; S. Lee, Juon, Martinez, Bawa, & Ma, 2009; S. J. Lee, 1994; Maddux, Galinsky, Cuddy, & Polifroni, 2008).

In order to fully understand why Asian Indian Americans are known as a model minority, it is worthy to mention some of the success stories of the visible members of this population. I provide this context, not to advance the notion of model minority. On the contrary, I highlight these so-called success stories in order to provide a landscape for the perpetuation of the model minority myth. There are many Asian Indian Americans who have achieved great honors and have been exemplified in the national media. Although they have been largely overlooked in the literature (Mehta, 2011), Asian Indian Americans have been touted as the model minority in both media outlets and in population statistics. According to a 2007 U.S. Census Bureau report, roughly sixty-eight percent of Asian Indian Americans had a bachelor's degree compared to the national average of twenty-seven percent (Suro, Kocchar, Passel, & Escobar, 2007). The median income of Asian Indian Americans is $51,000, whereas the median income of the US population as a whole is around $44,000 (Suro et al., 2007). It is estimated that sixty-one percent of Asian Indian Americans in the United States are in managerial, executive and professional occupations, compared to forty-five percent for the total Asian-American population and thirty-four percent for the U.S. total population (Suro et al., 2007; Wadhwa et al., 2007).

As entrepreneurs, Asian Indian Americans have earned a reputation for themselves. Among engineering and technology startup firms in the United States, twenty-six percent listed an Asian Indian as a founder or co-founder. This number suggests that Indians have started more companies than immigrants from the UK, China, Japan and Taiwan combined ("Indian Americans – A Story of Achievement," ; Wadhwa et al., 2007).

Asian Indian Americans have also made gains in political fields that had erstwhile been elusive to them. Indian-born Bobby Jindal, a Republican whose birth name was Piyush Jindal, is the current governor of Louisiana. Indian-born Raja Krishnamoorthi, a Democrat, ran a tight race for State Comptroller in Illinois in 2010 and lost by only 1 percentage point (Raja for 2010). A 2010 cover of *Newsweek* features Nikki Haley, the Republican governor from South Carolina, as the new face of the aging white Republican Party (Nikki Haley for Governor, 2010). Nikki Haley is a second generation Asian Indian American who was born to Sikh parents. She won the South Carolina governor's race by a wide margin and became the first female, non-white governor of the state (Davenport & Adcox, 2010). Last, but not least is Kamala Harris, the new Attorney General of California who has been touted by *The New York Times* as one of the seventeen women most likely to be the first female president of the United States (Zernike, 2008). Thus, not only have Asian Indian Americans, like the larger Asian American group, built a reputation for themselves for academic achievement, but they have also made forays into the world of public service and elected government.

Asian Indian American students have made significant headway in collegiate, political and social organizations. At Southern State University, the site of the proposed study, the past president of Student Government was an Asian Indian American student. A survey of various school websites across the country, including UCLA, Penn State, Yale and University of Texas at San Antonio, revealed at least one Asian Indian American as an organizational executive board member. That is a remarkable feat, considering Asian Indian American immigrants' journey from 1965 when they were finally allowed to bring their families into the United States. According to the statistics cited above, it is evident that Asian Indian Americans are becoming more visible on the local and national scene.

What is not evident is the other, less visible and important side of the Asian Indian American story – the fact that this community is not monolithic. In the U.S., the Asian Indian American community differs in all the ways that other ethnic and racial groups do, according to: socioeconomic status, English fluency, immigrant experience, as well as the contexts in which various families have arrived to the U.S. In actuality, Asian Indian American students represent both ends of the achievement spectrum and everything in between. While they are depicted as high achievers, they are also average and most in need. The proliferation of the stereotype of the nerdy Asian is dangerously limited and only presents a skewed view of the real experiences of this diverse group. There is no single or unbending Asian Indian American narrative.

Students perform at different levels, depending on subject matter. As an example, many more students than acknowledged often need developmental work in reading and writing English in both high school and college. Asian Indian American students also tend to have low rates of humanities majors. Rather than pitting academic achievement as an inherent Asian Indian family value, historian Liang Du (2008) writes, "Facing the open or hidden racism and discrimination, there were not many choices left other than the 'hard way' of striving for academic achievements. It was one of the few options that were left open through which they could possibly make it." In other words, students have excelled for lack of opportunities. Upward mobility through academic achievement is the only and the most viable option.

Perhaps one of the most prevailing myths about Asian Indian Americans lies in the perception that educators need not worry about them since they are such self-motivators. Socio-academic issues such as acceptance from peers, linguistic limitations, mental health issues, learning/physical disabilities and parents' unfamiliarity with navigating the particularities of the school system are often dismissed as irrelevant to this particular group.

While Asian Indian Americans value education and advancement into professional fields, they also value the traditions they carried over with them as they immigrated to the United States. The parents try to instill these cultural values into their children and view these as a means to retaining the drive to succeed in an alien land. The

parents retain their native language and their traditional child-rearing practices (Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003). Varma (2004) posits:

> Unlike other migrant communities Indians do not blend in easily into the Western cultures; they learn the new rules quickly but unlearn their cultural particularities with great difficulty…[they] are often well-adjusted split personalities: English or American in their work environment, irrepressibly Indian in the privacy of their homes. (p. 201)

Many times this "cultural particularity" can create a cultural conflict between children and parents. The birth culture, which the children see in the home, directly clashes with the dominant culture outside the home (Das & Kemp, 1997; Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002). Conflict arises when the children attempt to either blend the two dichotomous cultures together or try to create an impermeable membrane between the two (Gupta, 1997). Not only does this lead to conflict, it may also lead to a confused state of identity: a commonly used term among youth of Asian Indian descent is *ABCD* or *American Born Confused Desi*[1] (Gupta, 1997), indicating that youth have a difficult time reconciling these two identities.

Most Asian Indian American parents are very involved in the academic and social choices that their children make (Ang & Goh, 2006; Baptiste, 2006; Farver et al., 2002). In fact, some parents are willing to sacrifice the happiness of their child to ensure that they secure a prestigious major or career – the two most common among Asian Indians being the highly competitive fields of medicine and engineering (Dundes, Cho, & Kwak, 2009). When students are faced with such pressures they may seek support from their

[1] Desi refers to an individual of South Asian origin living abroad

peer groups, institutional services, such as counseling, or from their families (Atri & Sharma, 2006). Asian Indian American students face challenges when they visit college counseling centers, as many counselors may not recognize the cultural and ethnic component of student stress (Yoo, Burrola, & Steger, 2010). In addition, among Asian Indian Americans, family support can be a challenge, as family honor is tied to the academic achievement of the student (Ly, 2008; Saran, 2007).

Studies have shown that most Asian American parents have very high academic expectations from their children (Chu, 2001; S. Lee et al., 2009). Failure is shunned and the aim is to achieve the highest academic success. Failure is perceived as dishonorable and not in keeping with Asian Indian beliefs and cultural norms (Tewari, 2002). In an analysis of Asian students at a university counseling center in the Northeastern United States, thirty-four percent (n=71) it was reported that students listed various problems with family as their main psychological conflict (Tewari, 2002).

There are often differences between student desires and what families expect as a chosen career. Most often the family prevails and the student is faced with a major that he or she did not choose (Tewari, 2002). Such scenarios are far too common among Asian Indian Americans, and, as the literature review will show, permeate across the broad spectrum of the larger Asian American population. These stressors can manifest themselves in significant and tragic ways: the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) both list Asian Americans as a whole at a higher risk of suicide (McFadden, 2010), with the former reporting that the suicide rate

among Asian American youth between the ages of 15 and 24 is much higher than other groups (Leong, Leach, Yeh, & Chou, 2007). Research lists that some of the causes are the pressures to live up to the label of the model minority and family pressures (McFadden, 2010). Lee et. al. (2009) argue that the pressure to meet the high academic expectations of parents is a common source of stress among all Asian Americans. College campuses can be the site of these tragic choices among Asian American youth: for example, of the 21 student suicides in the past ten years at Cornell University, 13 were Asian Americans (Ly, 2008).

The pressure of conforming to the model minority and lack of communication with parents are cited as leading factors in suicide among Asian Americans (Cohen, 2007). Further, there is an internalization of the pressures related to the aforementioned factors. Noh (as quoted in Cohen, 2007) states that:

> It's very overt -- parents say, 'You must choose this major or this type of job' or 'You should not bring home As and Bs, only As'…. The line of communication in Asian culture is one way. It's communicated from the parents downward.…if you can't express your anger, it turns to helplessness. It turns inward into depression for girls. For boys it's more likely to turn outwards into rebellious behavior and behavioral problems like drinking and fighting. (para 7, 10)

Thus the combination of cultural value conflicts and high academic expectations sets the stage for mental stress and anxiety among members of the Asian American population, of which Asian Indian Americans are the second largest group.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how undergraduate Asian Indian American students at *Southern State University*, an elite state flagship university, describe their interactions with their parents in the particular areas of academic performance and academic choices. In many cases, Asian Indian American parents force their students into majors they believe to be prestigious irrespective of their child's individual strengths or interests. Through this research, I sought answers about how the students negotiated the future pathways of their lives within the confines of traditional pressures and the under the glare of the model minority label.

Prior studies have suggested that Asian American students feel mental stress when they try to live up to their parents' academic expectations - experiencing feelings of hopelessness and failure as a result (see for example Chu, 2001; Dundes et al., 2009; S. Lee et al., 2009). In the current study, I explored what stressors and resultant stress the students reported when they interacted with their parents about their academic performance. As well, I examined the coping strategies employed by the students to deal with the aforementioned stresses. In addition, data from the study revealed the individuals, groups, organizations or campus services these students reached out to when they were under stress from family expectations.

By examining mental and emotional stress issues, I sought to address an important concern about Asian Americans in general about seeking help when they feel stress while dealing with family conflict and the model minority myth. Prior studies have

addressed the mental health needs of Asian Americans in general (see for example Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Butler, Lee, & Gross, 2007; Chandras, Eddy, & Spaulding, 1999; Gloria & Ho, 2003; S. Lee et al., 2009; Lorenzo, Frost, & Reinherz, 2000; Saw & Okazaki, 2010). Fewer studies have studied the mental health needs of South Asian students (see for example Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Atri & Sharma, 2006; Chandras et al., 1999; Das & Kemp, 1997; Lorenzo et al., 2000). Even fewer studies address Asian Indian Americans in this context (see for example Conrad & Pacquiao, 2005; Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007; Jambunathan & Counselman, 2002; Pangamala & Plummer, 1998).

Asian Americans, in general, and Asian Indian Americans, in particular, remain a severely under-researched group (S. Museus & M. Chang, 2009; S. D. Museus & M. J. Chang, 2009). Nevertheless, I am not the first one researching intergenerational communication or conflict among Asian Americans or Asian Indian Americans. While a few prior studies have researched this population, the focus of these studies was different from the unique focus that I plan to bring in to my study. Most of the prior studies, which I will discuss here, have focused on cultural clash in dating and marriage, or on identity formation issues:

- Khurana's doctoral dissertation investigated intergenerational communication between Asian Indian American young adults and their parents. The focus of this study was the intergenerational conflict generated by dating, relationships, sexuality issues, and arranged

marriages. Her study focused on communication patterns and intergenerational conflict (Khurana, 2008).

- Chakrabarti's dissertation studied intergenerational relationships in the realm of educational experiences and education attainments of Asian Indian Americans. Her study focused on the expectations of parents and educators from the students and how the three groups define success. The sample of this study was limited to middle schoolers in a midwestern city in the United States (Chakrabarti, 2008).
- A 2005 qualitative, ethnographic study by Motwani-Accapadi examined how membership in a South Asian American sorority impacted the identity development of South Asian American female college students.
- Rupam Saran (2005) studied the positive stereotyping and its impact on the academic achievements of Asian Indian American students. She limited her study to high school students in the New York City area. Further, her study did not address the key question that my study seeks to answer: how do Asian Indian American students describe their communication with their parents while they are expected to be the model minority by their parents, school, and peers?

As noted, there have been studies done about the broader South Asian or Asian American groups and the model minority myth (see for example Atri & Sharma, 2006; S. Lee et al., 2009; S. J. Lee, 1994; Vaidhyanathan, 2000) but very few are narrowly

focused on Asian Indian Americans (see for example Conrad & Pacquiao, 2005; Farver et al., 2002; Khanna, McDowell, Perumbilly, & Titus, 2009; Varghese & Rae Jenkins, 2009). A search of *Dissertation Proquest* did not reveal any studies that examined the interactions between Asian Indian American undergraduates and their parents, regarding academic choices and academic performance from the student perspective alone. The use a phenomenological research design enabled me to build a multi-dimensional image of the students I interviewed. For this study, I chose to restrict the sample to students alone as I sought to study intergenerational relationships among Asian Indian American from the singular lens of the student. Prior research has been conducted on students and parents (Chakrabarti, 2008) and parents alone (Balan, 2009; Jambunathan & Counselman, 2002). However, not many have observed the Asian Indian American experience from the viewpoint of the student alone. Further, the research questions were structured to study the student perceptions of the interactions with parents.

Southern State University, the site for this study, is an elite public university in the Southwestern United States. There was a large Asian American population at this university, with 18% of the incoming freshman class in Fall 2011 listed as Asian American. Asian Americans were the third largest group behind Whites and Hispanics ("The Freshman Year," 2011). A further breakdown of the sub-ethnicities was not available to say how many of the Asian Americans are Asian Indian Americans. However, a quick search through the registered student organization database revealed at

least 15 Asian Indian student organizations suggesting the presence of a sizeable Asian Indian American population ("Registered Student Organization Database," 2011).

Southern State University is a highly selective public school and is consistently ranked in the top schools in the country. Admission is very competitive with seventy-three percent of the incoming freshman class coming from the top ten percent of their high school class. Roughly ninety percent of the incoming class placed in the top quarter in their high school ("The Freshman Year," 2011). The largest concentration of Asian American students at the university were in the colleges of Engineering, Business and Natural Sciences ("2010-2011 Statistical Handbook Student Characteristics Fall 2010," 2011). According to the handbook (2010), 25 percent of the students in Natural Sciences, 22 percent in Business, and 17 percent in Engineering were Asian American in Fall 2010. Studies have previously shown that the Natural Sciences and Business were popular major choices that Asian American parents preferred for their children (Keshishian, Brocavich, Boone, & Pal, 2010; Song & Glick, 2004). The large numbers of Asian Americans at this university made this an ideal place to study Asian Indian Americans and how they navigated through their interactions with their parents.

The study was important, as Asian Indian Americans are becoming a larger voice in the social, political, and academic scene while simultaneously at risk for severe psychological distress and even suicide. Furthermore, the experiences of students in this population are largely underreported in the research literature. It is crucial for administrators, faculty, and the Asian Indian American community at large invested in

the lives of second-generation students to hear their voices. With this introduction complete, I have listed the research questions that guided the current study in the next section.

Research Questions

1. How do undergraduate second-generation Asian Indian American students at an elite, selective public university in the Southern United States describe their interactions with their parents with regards to their academic performance and academic choices?
2. What stressors, if any, do second-generation Asian Indian American students identify when interacting with their parents?
3. What strategies do these students use to alleviate the mental stress, if any, from their communication with their parents about their academic performance and choices?

Methodology

Through a phenomenological approach, I captured the narratives of undergraduate second-generation Asian Indian American students currently enrolled at Southern State University. The participants consisted of currently enrolled, undergraduate, second-generation Asian Indian American students. Trustworthiness and truthfulness were ensured through member checking where transcripts were returned to the participants to

ensure accuracy of analysis. I also remained in constant contact with my methodologist in order to discuss the findings from the transcripts to ensure truthfulness and accuracy.

Significance of the Study

A significant contribution of this study was that it added to the sparse body of research about Asian Indian American undergraduate students. The overall research about Asian Indian Americans is sparse and this study generated questions to spur further research into similar matters related to Asian Indian American students. Museus and Chang (2009) argue that the need for further research on Asian Americans is urgent,

> Given that the academic community highly values research that is grounded in existing research and makes clear its contributions to building on that literature, difficulties in fulfilling these benchmarks due to the absence of a knowledge base on Asian Americans can lead to research on this population being overlooked or, even worse, devalued. (p. 100)

Much has been written about the accolades that Asian American Indian have earned in various fields of endeavor, but the literature is scant about how these students interact with their parents and family with regards to their academic performance and choices. Some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that the frequent use of the model minority label is an alternate form of racism (Chou, 2008; S. S. Lee, 2010; Yoo et al., 2010). Thus, it was important to tell the stories of the students in the current study in in order to illustrate how they navigated the model minority label and how such a label impacted consequent family expectations and interactions.

This study also benefitted the general members of the Asian Indian American community. Results of this study revealed how students of this community perceived the support system around them – be it family, university or community. As an insider, and as someone who has observed Asian Indian American students for many years, I brought a unique understanding of the issues these students faced. I identified with their cultural traditions and hierarchical family structures. While this reflexive advantage aided me in the study, it was not an advantage in all interactions. I still had to work hard to overcome the "aunty factor" attached to my age. Further, it took some careful questioning to win the confidence and trust of the participants so that they were able to discuss the topics in depth. At the end of the study, I provided thick and rich descriptions of the experiences of these students, which also added to the body of knowledge about Asian Indian American students.

Identifying student perceptions associated with parental or family pressures and the resulting support mechanisms is valuable to various stakeholders in any university or college setting. Student affairs professionals often assume that all Asian Americans are well adjusted and, thus, need fewer special services than their White, African-American or Hispanic counterparts (Omizo, 2008). Such a position can lead to feelings of isolation and helplessness among the students as they may perceive that they have nowhere to turn for help.

This study was critical for student services, including mental health services on campus. It is imperative for the counselors to understand the cultural considerations

while counseling Asian Indian American populations. They need to know the struggles Asian Indian American students in order to succeed. In the light of increasing suicide rates among this population of students, it is critical to understand their mental health needs (S. Lee et al., 2009; McFadden, 2010). Family honor is paramount among Asian Indian Americans and, thus, an understanding of student-family interaction is essential, particularly in relation to academic choices.

Definitions of Terms

- **Asian American.** This is a broad term that defines a person of Asian origin or one who traces his / her roots to the Asian continent. The term Asian American seems to have a cloak of homogeneity around it. To the contrary, the group is made up of people from many ethnic, religious and geographic regions within Asia. There are many cultural and sub-ethnic variations within the broader Asian American group(Kitano, 1981). One such variation is Asian Indian American.
- **Asian Indian American.** For the purposes of this study, an Asian Indian American is an individual who has family roots in India and is currently residing in the United States.
- **Model minority.** This term refers to a set of stereotypes which assumes that all Asian Americans are successful and do not face the same struggles other minorities face. In addition, this stereotype suggests that all Asian Americans are flourishing both at work and school. It also implies, albeit incorrectly, that Asian-Americans do

not have the same mental health needs as their White or African-American counterparts (S. Lee et al., 2009).

- **Second generation.** A second-generation immigrant is one who moved to the United States at an early age, usually by age 12, or was born in the United States to foreign-born parents (Min, 2002, p. 13). Family immigration from India is a relatively new phenomenon with most of it happening after the 1965 Hart-Cellar immigration act. It is imperative that the stories of second-generation Asian Indian Americans not get buried under the model minority blanket. The new generation of Asian Indian Americans is caught in a dichotomous state with a traditional culture of their traditional first-generation immigrant parents at home and the dominant culture outside. Saran (2005) argues that as this generation gets more Americanized, there will be a decline in their academic performance and their desire to hold on to traditional Indian values.
- **Traditional.** The term traditional, in the current context, is used to define an Asian Indian American family that uses Indian traditional values to guide their parenting styles, their daily living, and their interactions with their children. Asian Indian Americans are a collectivist culture, with traditional beliefs such as respect and obedience of elders (Farver et al., 2002), with a heavy emphasis on the family unit compared to the individual with strictly defined family hierarchy (E. Lee, 1997). Lee (1997) states that, in traditional Asian families, "obligation and shame are the mechanisms that traditionally help to reinforce societal expectations and proper

behavior." Parents encourage the practice of arranged marriage while dating and pre-marital sex are frowned upon (Dasgupta, 1998).

- **STEM.** The term STEM refers to the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. Six of the eight participants in the current study majored in STEM fields.

Limitations and Assumptions

This study was specifically focused on Asian Indian American students rather than all Asian American students. Many studies have focused on this larger demographic, and this study deliberately narrows down the scope to this specific group, given their invisibility in the literature. This study was limited to a small sample of undergraduate students at an elite, public university in the Southwestern United States; there were unique aspects to this institution and community that preclude generalizability to other populations of Asian Indian American students. Further, the admissions standards of this university were rigorous. A majority of the admitted students are students were ranked in the top 10–25 percent of their high school class. While there were other public universities in the state, the selective admissions at this university made it a unique setting.

In the course of this study, I was cautious about the Hawthorne effect not creeping into the study. Since I am of Asian Indian origin, and of the same age as the parents of some of the students interviewed, it was a challenge to get full and honest responses from the students. I worked hard in order to establish rapport with the participants. The interviewees were assured of confidentiality as well as the absence of researcher bias and

prejudgments. Due to my insider status in the Asian Indian American community, I did not come to this study with a blank canvas; rather I was able to connect with the students in a unique way. While I was constantly evaluating my own relationship with my own children during the data collection process, I was conscious about remaining neutral and not allowing my own position as an Asian Indian American mother guide or direct the questions.

Summary

In summary, the major aim of this study was to capture the lived experiences of the Asian Indian American undergraduate students as they described the phenomena of their interactions with their parents about their academic performance and academic choices. The research also examined how these students navigated the expectations generated by the model minority myth on campus and with their parents. Since the Asian Indian American population is becoming increasingly visible in the classroom, the courtroom, the boardroom, and in Washington, this study aimed to fill the large void in the research about Asian Indian American students. While the media extols the successes of this population, there is little known about the lived experiences of Asian Indian American students as they negotiate academic expectations with their parents and within themselves.

In Chapter Two, I will present the theoretical framework and review the relevant and current literature on Asian Americans. Chapter Three will detail the research design, the methodology along with the interview protocol. Chapter Four will provide the details

of the data analysis and chapter Five will provide a summary of the key findings of this study. The letter for invitation to the study is attached in Appendix A and the interview protocol is attached in Appendix B.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

> And so they entered a new and alien world where they would become a racial minority, seen as different and inferior, where they would become strangers – Ronald Takaki.
>
> Certainly there's a lot of Asians doing well, at the top of the curve, and that's a point of pride, but there are just as many struggling at the bottom of the curve, and we wanted to draw attention to that – Robert Teranishi.

This chapter presents a review of the literature that is related to Asian Americans and Asian Indian Americans. By examining what is already known about Asian Indian Americans, I will identify gaps in the literature and establish the need for this study. The chapter is organized in the following manner: first, I provide a historical perspective on Asian American immigration to the United States. Thereafter, I discuss the model minority label, parental and intergenerational issues. Third, I present a review of literature on mental health issues and anxiety among Asian Americans. At the end of the chapter, I introduce the theoretical framework, a conceptual model and an overview of the gaps in the research.

In conducting research for this literature review, I discovered that the scholarship on Asian Indian American college students is sparse. This has frustrated other scholars of higher education as well. In my consultation with Professor Rupam Saran of City University of New York, she confirmed the paucity of research on Asian Indian Americans and lamented how she was forced to use the broader Asian American group as

the basis for her research on Asian Indian Americans (R. Saran, personal communication, October 17, 2011). She also stressed the urgent need for more and immediate research on this population.

As stated in chapter one, the goal of this study is to examine the following research questions:

1. How do undergraduate second-generation Asian Indian American students at an elite, selective public university in the Southern United States describe their interactions with their parents with regards to their academic performance and academic choices?
2. What stressors, if any, do second-generation Asian Indian American students identify when interacting with their parents?
3. What strategies do these students use to alleviate the mental stress, if any, from their communication with their parents about their academic performance and choices?

Asian Immigration: A Historical Perspective

The history of Asian immigration is a long, complex story of seclusion and bias perpetuated by the United States (U.S.) government. Exclusionary practices led to a variety of laws being passed that encouraged discrimination against and the isolation of immigrants from Asia (Cushman, 2000). It was only after the passage of the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 that large numbers of immigrants arrived from Asia. Asian Americans were

"looked different and thus were easy to categorize, to identify, to stereotype, and to treat differently" (Kitano, 1981).

STRANGERS: THE FIRST WAVE AND THE SUBSEQUENT EXCLUSION

Asians were voluntary immigrants who not brought to the United States through slavery or war; rather they came in search of economic or political freedom (Weis, Farrar, & Petrie, 1989) . They came to the United States seeking economic and educational opportunities, not just for themselves, but for future generations as well (Takaki, 1998; Weis et al., 1989) and first arrived on the West coast of the United States (Kitano, 1981). The sentiment of the first wave was captured in a Japanese verse "Hugh (sic) dreams of fortune…go with me to foreign lands, across the oceans" and further "in America money grows on trees" (Takaki, 2008, p. 233).

The California Gold Rush of 1848 created a demand for cheap labor to build railroads and to work in gold mines. Between 1848 and 1878, about 225,000 Chinese workers came to the United States (Min, 2002, p. 3). Takaki writes that the first few waves of immigrants were also a response to requests from the plantations in Hawaii for Chinese and Japanese labor (Takaki, 1998). By creating anti-Asian sentiments, the plantation owners pitted the laborers from China and Japan against the natives. The owners proclaimed that the immigrants were far more productive than the native Hawaiians (Hirschman, Wong, & Morrison, 1986; Takaki, 1998). Although Chinese workers made up only 0.002 percent of the labor force, the native workers perceived their very presence as a threat (Takaki, 1998, pp.111-112). The white workers reacted by

showing their disapproval through organized protests leading to the further deepening of anti-Asian rhetoric.

The white population viewed Asians as physically different and economically threatening to the nation (Kitano, 1981). While writing about the prolonged discrimination against Asian Americans, Kitano (1981) states:

> Asian immigrants looked different and thus were easy to categorize, to identify, to stereotype, and to treat differently. Further these "exotic" people, one of their kinder labels, were products of cultures that were presumed to be vastly different from the American-European stream, so that the interaction between race and culture has led to a number of suppositions about Asians that continue to the present day. (p. 126)

The unrest among white workers, along with the anti-immigrant emotions that were commonplace, led Congress to pass the Chinese Exclusion Acts in 1882. These laws were aimed at curtailing or completely eliminating the migration of Chinese workers to the United States. The exclusionary legislations were hardly related to a class struggle; rather they were proposed for economic reasons (Takaki, 2008). White Americans experienced unemployment for the first time in the 1880's and this experience generated fear as well as a backlash against the group that was alleged to have caused the job losses (Takaki, 1998).

If Chinese were made to feel unwelcome in the United States, Asian Indians were regarded with even greater disdain (Eckerson, 1966). The Bellingham Riots in 1907 were a testament to this divisionary sentiment where white laborers rounded up seven hundred "Hindoos" in the town of Everett, Washington, and drove them across the border to Canada (Takaki, 1998, p. 297). Chinese and Asian Indian migrants made intense

efforts to create a sense of community for themselves. Both populations crafted ways to beat the Alien Land Laws and become landowners. Writing about Asian Indians, Takaki (2008) writes that "Asian-Indian landownership indicated a shift from sojourner to settler…they hoped to send for their families…after the enactment of the 1917 Immigration Law, men with wives in India could not bring them here…their religion helped to give coherence and solace to their lives" (p 308-312).

REDEMPTION: THE HART-CELLAR IMMIGRATION ACT AND THE IMPACT ON IMMIGRATION

The legal barriers placed in the path of Asian immigration did not just block immigrants from coming to this country; they also perpetuated the already existing bias against Asian Americans. For immigrants, particularly Asians, redemption came in the form of the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965, commonly known as the Immigration Act of 1965, signed into law by President Johnson on October 3, 1965 (Kelly, 1965). This act repealed quotas based on national origins and immigration restrictions based on race. As a result of this act, immigration from Asia increased dramatically as immigrants could now bring their families with them as they looked for a better life in the United States. In addition, they were guaranteed a stable life as an immigrant ("A Great Moment in Chinese American History," 2009; Takaki, 1998). In addition to the abolition of quotas, Asian Indians were allowed to acquire United States citizenship. Further, after the Hart-Cellar act, a large majority of Asian Indians immigrated to the United States. Many of these groups were different from previous immigrants. They were educated professionals

– many of them doctors, engineers and professors. Farrell, Guin & Johnson (1997) state that the new immigrants were "less inclined than the old immigrants to blend fully into American society." This new wave preferred to hold on to and preserve their traditions and customs. Because family immigration from India is so new, this is a young immigrant population. The second and third generations are still in the process of defining themselves.

Currently, Chinese Americans comprise 22% of the Asian American population in the United States and Asian Indian Americans make up 16.9% (*US Census Bureau News*, 2010). In the next section, I will examine the literature on the model minority stereotype that is applied to Asian Americans and the related challenges faced by this population.

The Model Minority Stereotype

Sociologist William Petersen first offered the concept of the model minority in January 1966 in an article published in the *New York Times* magazine section. Petersen disparaged affirmative action and praised the success achieved by Japanese Americans without any special concessions (Petersen, 1966). In his article, he wrote that the Japanese had suffered unspeakable horrors at the camps but instead of becoming the "problem minority," they had broken every stereotype of suppressed minorities (Petersen, 1966). He wrote, "By any criterion of good citizenship that we choose, the Japanese Americans are better than any other group in our society, including native-born Whites"

(Petersen, 1966, p. 21). In comparing Japanese immigrants to other immigrants, Petersen (1966) further elaborated:

> Nisei generally have lived in neighborhoods characterized by overcrowding, poverty, dilapidated housing, and other 'causes' of crime. In such a slum environment, even though surrounded by ethnic groups with high crime rates, they have been exceptionally law abiding...In Los Angeles today, while the general crime rate is rising, for Japanese adults it is continuing to fall…[The Japanese] could climb over the highest barriers our racists were able to fashion. (p. 40)

Petersen went on to elaborate how the Japanese placed a high value on education, which was a key to their success despite seemingly insurmountable odds. He wrote, "the key to success in the United States, for Japanese or anyone else, is education. Among persons aged 14 years or over in 1960, the median years of schooling completed by the Japanese were 12.2 compared with 11.1 years by the Chinese, 11.0 by Whites, 9.2 by Filipinos, 8.6 by Negroes and 8.2 by Indians [native Americans]" (Petersen, 1966, pp. 36-37).

The model minority, as suggested by Petersen, was hardly an endorsement of Japanese Americans; rather it was a criticism of other minorities of color. The model minority myth drives a wedge between Asian Americans and others. Not only are Asian Americans separated from Whites as the perception is that they perform better than Whites but also a chasm is created between Asian Americans and other minorities of color (Chou, 2008; L. A. Maxwell, 2007; Museus, 2008; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008; Saran, 2007). Some scholars (citation) consider the model

minority label to be a proxy to racism and claim that it serves to drive a wedge between Asian Americans and other minorities. Chou (2008) writes:

> Current Asian Americans have not de jure experienced discriminatory laws or policies as in the past, but they de facto confront a new kind of anti-Asian sentiment and face seemingly benign racist stereotypes…the notion of model minority exemplifies a contemporary racism…the notion of model minority exemplifies a historical shift from a biologistic conception of race to cultural one. (pp. 220 – 221)

The picture that Petersen (1966) painted of the model minority has since expanded to include the entire Asian American population. Many Asian Americans have achieved success in both academic and professional fields. The model minority stereotype, which surrounds all Asian American students suggests that they will outperform others and that they do well in courses, such as math and sciences, that are traditionally considered difficult for Whites, African-American and Hispanic students (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; E. S. Lee & Rong, 1988; Mittapalli, 2009; Schneider & Lee, 1990). Asian Americans are labeled a model minority due to their perceived achievements, their academic achievements, professional success, stable family lives and low rates of common teenage problems such as addictions and teenage pregnancies (Balan, 2009; Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Chu, 2001; S. J. Lee, 1994; Rim, 2007). Such a stereotype, which is incorrectly seen as an honor, leads to high expectations from within the family, the community, and the general population.

While the model minority stereotype persists, it is also a barrier to understanding the Asian American population. This mythical label throws a cloak of invisibility around members of this group. As a direct result, Asian Americans are largely ignored in higher

education research, in planning services for needy groups, in counseling training, and in the classroom (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Wing, 2007). The "invisible minority," then, is an unfortunate consequence of categorizing all the members of this population as the model minority. Museus and Kiang (2009) list five misconceptions that the model minority label creates. These are (a) Asian Americans are all the same, (b) Asian American are not really racial and ethnic minorities, (c) Asian Americans do not encounter major challenges because of their race, (d) Asian Americans do not seek or require resources and support, and (e) college degree completion is equivalent to success (pp. 7-11). Various studies have suggested the dangers of using disaggregated data for Asian Americans since this population is not homogenous (see for example S. Lee et al., 2009; Maddux et al., 2008; Museus, 2008; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Qin et al., 2008). While almost 64 percent of Asian Indian Americans attain bachelor's degrees, only about seven percent of Hmong are able to do the same even though they both fall under the broad Asian American umbrella (Museus & Kiang, 2009). The tendency of scholars, business, news media, and universities to rely on disaggregated data and, thus, believe that Asian Americans do not need attention is "particularly problematic" (Museus & Kiang, 2009, p. 7).

Several studies have shown that this high level of expectation can cause stress when the young members of this population struggle to live up to the model minority label (see for example Asher, 2008; Atri & Sharma, 2006; Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; S. Lee et al., 2009; S. S. Lee, 2010; Museus & Kiang, 2009). A further danger of

the model minority label is the stress on the students when they fail to meet the high expectations set forth by society, family, university and peers (Chandras et al., 1999; Chu, 2001; S. Lee et al., 2009; S. J. Lee, 1994; Ly, 2008; Tewari, 2002; Yoo et al., 2010).

A 2008 qualitative study involving 120 adolescents in the Boston and New York City area concluded that Chinese adolescents faced exceedingly high expectations from their parents to succeed in school. These, occasionally unrealistic expectations, caused intergenerational conflict to the extent that some of these adolescents felt completely alienated from their parents. Some of the participants in the study also admitted to hiding the reality of their academic progress from their parents or lying to the parents altogether (Qin et al., 2008). This study also revealed other stressors of this young population such as acculturative stress, the model minority myth, and peer-harassment. This study included only Chinese adolescents in middle to early high school and did not include other Asian American populations (Qin et al., 2008). Since there are many within-group differences in Asian Americans (Kitano, 1981), these results cannot be generalized to members of other Asian groups.

EXPLANATION OF ASIAN AMERICAN SUCCESS

While it is known that Asian Americans excel in academics, less is known about the reasons for this success. Ogbu suggested that Asian Americans were voluntary minorities and, thus, they perceived academic success as a vehicle of social mobility in a strange culture. Although they did not know the language and the customs, they adapted

with respect to the host culture. That, he suggested, was the key to Asian American success (Weis et al., 1989).

Motivation. As a part of their Self Determination Theory, Deci and Ryan (2000) offered their theoretical interpretation of motivation. They posited that a student could be motivated to perform well for the sheer pleasure of doing well and self-fulfillment. Alternatively, the student may be seeking the approval of a parent, teacher or peer group and thus the motivation type is completely different (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The authors proposed that there existed two different kinds of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic.

Intrinsic motivation refers to "doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable" (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsically motivated individuals do activities for the sheer pleasure of them. As an example, activities such as solving math equations would be undertaken as it satisfies some inner urge of the participant rather than the promise of an external reward. Conversely, *extrinsic motivation* is a construct that refers to "doing something because it leads to a separable outcome" (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Students might perform extrinsically motivated tasks to please parents, peers, teachers, other individuals or groups. Many extrinsically motivated tasks may be performed unwillingly. Alternatively, many students may perform these tasks willingly due to the ultimate reward from performing the task. Ryan and Deci define the unwilling state as "impoverished forms of motivation" (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The alternate state, or the willing state, is defined by them as an "active, agentic state" (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The authors define the most restrictive form of external motivation as "external regulation"

where the students may perform a task purely to get endorsement or approval from an external source such as parents.

Like many affluent and highly educated immigrants, among Asian Americans there is great importance given to academic achievement. Various studies and scholars have shown that, for Asian American students, motivation of the kind that Deci and Ryan describe as extrinsic is the main factor pushing them towards academic success (e.g. Abada & Tenkorang, 2009; Ang & Goh, 2006; Baptiste, 2006; Das & Kemp, 1997; Dundes et al., 2009; Farver et al., 2002; Felter, 2008; Garrod & Kilkenny, 2007; Gupta, 1997; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Friend, & Powell; S. Lee et al., 2009; S. J. Lee, 1994; Saran, 2007). Some studies suggest that Asian American students are motivated to do well in order to please their parents and out of fear of punishment from their parents (Das & Kemp, 1997; Dundes et al., 2009; Garrod & Kilkenny, 2007; Patel, Power, & Bhavnagri, 1996).

Heredity. While there have been several theories offered about Asian American academic success, Sue and Okazaki's theory of *relative functionalism* is the one that has resonated most with scholars. There are still scholars who propose that Asian Americans perform well due to biological differences or heredity. This is akin to a form of scientific racism, which is hardly new. As early as 1856, in *The Inequality of The Human Races*, biologist and genetic theorist Gobineau had proposed that some races are superior because of their biological differences (Gobineau, 1856).

The heredity argument about some races being superior to others continued through to the 21st century when James Watson, a Nobel laureate from the United States, suggested that some races were superior to others. He argued that while all social policies were based on an assumption that all races were equal, empirical evidence proved otherwise (Nugent, 2007). Although he was referring to white Anglo-Europeans rather than Asians, some scholars, such as Richard Lynn, have extended this analogy to Asians (Omaar, 2009). Omaar explored this controversial theory that suggested that intelligence is linked to race in Britain's Channel 4 series *Race and Intelligence: Science's Last Taboo* (2009). However, work done by Stevenson and Stigler (2006) on Japanese and American children discounts all prior theories of genetic dominance and proposes a more cultural model of academic superiority. Stevenson and Stigler (2006) concluded that the academic expectations and school-home environment influenced the academic achievement gaps between Asians and Americans more than any genetic reasons.

Relative functionalism. Lee and Rong (1988) proposed the *Niche theoretical perspective* for Asian American success. They dismissed previous studies that distinguished between economic migrants and refugees. Lee and Rong maintain that all migrants seek the same goals irrespective of the reasons for migration – a better life. It is for this reason that they stress high academic achievement among children. *Asian American educational achievement: A phenomenon in search of an explanation* published in 1990 also partly concurred with the argument put forth by Lee and Rong that Asian

American success was motivated by economic and social mobility. In this article, the theory put forth by Stanley Sue and Sumie Okazaki, both Asian Americans themselves, was perhaps the most plausible explanation for Asian American academic and professional achievement. While Sue and Okazaki did not discount cultural values as being important they added a new dimension to the model minority discussion. The theoretical framework that they proposed was the *Relative Functionalism theory*. They argued that Asian Americans excelled in academics since there were no other avenues for advancement available to them such as sports, theater-arts and politics. Sue and Okazaki (1990) methodically compared the success Asian Americans have earned to other minority groups such as Jews who have, due to discrimination, excelled in certain fields as others were closed to them. Further, the authors dismantled the case against heredity as the sole factor in Asian American successes. Sue and Okazaki (1990) discounted culture alone as being a significant factor in Asian American success since there are so many cultural differences between and within this large group. Cultural factors merely augment the mediators to success: effort and motivation (Sue & Okazaki, 1990). Sue and Okazaki claim that the motivation to succeed is very high among Asian Americans. This motivation is fostered by high expectations from the parents, which lead to high expectations in the children. Within-family social capital, within-family social processes, and between-family social capital all led to high achievement among Asian Americans (Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998).

A 1997 study of high school children concluded that "parental pressure serves as one of the primary catalysts behind Asian American students' motivational behavior" (Eaton & Dembo, 1997). One of the conclusions of the study conducted by Eaton and Dembo was that "Asian American students simultaneously possess a high need to approach success, because of the cultural value of high achievement, and a strong need to avoid punishment, because of the fear of academic failure" (Eaton & Dembo, 1997).

The interaction of Asian American students with their parents is a topic that is presently under-researched. There are studies that examine how parents view the task of raising their children and there are other studies that examine how students react to culture value conflict with parents (Farver et al., 2002; Farver, Yiyuan, Bhadha, Narang, & Lieber, 2007; Varghese & Rae Jenkins, 2009; Zhou, 1997). However, there are few studies that examine interactions between the two (e.g. Steinberg, 2001; Dinh, 2006). The present study added to this sparse literature about the intergenerational interactions between Asian Indian American parents and their children.

THE MYTH OF THE MODEL MINORITY

The model minority stereotype suggests that all Asian Americans excel academically and have few social problems. But, in reality, this is the myth of the model minority. While it is true that Asian Americans perform well in academics, the opposite is also true-they face issues in many areas of mental health and wellness such as parent/child conflict, family stress and the associated emotional problems (Chandras et

al., 1999; Das & Kemp, 1997; S. Lee et al., 2009; Lorenzo et al., 2000; Ly, 2008; Saw & Okazaki, 2010).

Further, the model minority label fails to recognize differences in various other factors that impact academic and professional success such as immigration patterns, socio-economic status, parental education, and parental involvement. News stories such as the Time cover story from 1987 titled *Those Asian American Whiz Kids* also led to misconceptions about the Asian American population. Referring to the 1987 magazine cover and the 2011 *Time* magazine cover featuring an Asian American "Tiger mother," a columnist in a Japanese newspaper in California further explained the heterogeneity in this population as follows:

> I attended schools with an abundance of "Asian whiz kids" of all stripes and backgrounds. Some were, I think, just naturally inclined to excel academically, while others were diligent students who worked hard, with varying degrees of parental pressure. There were also some really smart yet naïve kids with no sense of street smarts; also, there were some kids of Asian background who were not only not whiz kids, they were outright hellions, rebellious troublemakers. No cover story in Time Magazine for them! (Johnston, 2011)

There are many gaps in the model minority research. Primarily, Asian Indian Americans are absent from most of the research on Asian Americans. Various studies on Asian Americans include only Chinese, Filipino, Japanese and Koreans (see for example Chandras et al., 1999; Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Choi, 2010; Chou, 2008; Dundes et al., 2009; Fong, 2008; Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994; Kitano, 1981; S. Lee et al., 2009; Leong et al., 2007). The aforementioned cover of *Time* magazine in 1987 did not feature any Asian Indian American child.

While there are studies that have examined the model minority myth and those that have tried to debunk the model minority myth, there is little research about the way Asian Indian youth communicate with their parents and how they cope with the stress of intergenerational conflict generated by the factors related to the model minority myth.

Parenting and Family

In this section I focus on the literature related to parenting and as it applies to Asian American students and adolescents. The review is organized into the following sections (a) cultural variations in parenting, (b) intergenerational conflict, and (c) family interdependence.

Cultural Variations In Parenting

Cultural variations in parenting are common. Many immigrant parents try to hold on to their traditional roots and traditional parenting styles as compared to Caucasian parents (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009; Ang & Goh, 2006; Baptiste, 2006; Das & Kemp, 1997). Each ethnic group has unique cultural perspectives and characteristics. These guide and influence the overall parenting style. This is particularly true of Asian Americans as discussed by Julian, McHenry and McKelvey (1994). When Julian et al. (1994) controlled for socio-economic status (SES) and compared parenting values across cultures, they found little significant differences across ethnic groups. The authors concluded that although no major differences were observed, Asian American parents

stood out in that they stressed academic achievement much more than their counterparts such as Caucasian and African American parents. Asian American parents also stressed self-control and deference to elders; and involvement in helping more with homework and school tasks. Asian American parents displayed a more conservative style of parenting than other groups and did not think adversely of slapping the child (Julian et al., 1994).

Although this study sheds light on the parenting style of Asian Americans, I question the strength of this study, as the Asian American sample was rather small (n=49) in a relatively large overall sample (N=3,517). This study was a quantitative study, which will not yield rich descriptions like a study that uses qualitative methods of inquiry. Further, this study did not control for other factors such as parental education levels, residential neighborhoods, years past immigration and levels of acculturation.

Patel, Power and Bhanvangri (1997) studied the correlation between modernity, acculturation and traditional traits that Asian Indian mothers and fathers tried to inculcate in their children. The major purpose of the study was to decipher if there were significant differences between maternal and paternal values in parenting when examined in light of the acculturation level of each parent. This study was conducted on professional Indian families, who originated from the state of Gujarat in India and who had at least one adolescent living at home. The purposefully selected sample was chosen from one Indian sub-population to control for religious, language and cultural differences (Patel et al., 1996). In the conclusions of the study, the authors found distinct differences between the

parenting expectations and styles of fathers and mothers. They found that fathers, who professed to be modern in their beliefs, wanted their daughters to be successful and competent rather than submissive and well mannered as traditional fathers would. Mothers, on the other hand, wanted their daughters to incorporate North American characteristics. This intense desire for incorporating North American characteristics in their offspring was directly proportional to the length of stay in the United States. The study suggests that the longer the mothers lived in America, the more Americanized they became. There were several factors that prevented the generalization of these findings. Most importantly, the study was conducted on one single type of ethnic sub-group among Asian Americans. Due to large within-group and between-group differences in the Asian American population (Asher, 2008; Chandras et al., 1999; Fong, 2008) the results cannot be extended to other Asian groups.

Abada and Tenkorang (2009) found that parental education is a strong predictor of post-secondary achievement. In a large-scale study (*N*=10,908) in Canada, the researchers emphasized that Asians surpassed other minorities in academic achievements. Since Asian immigrants are generally well educated (Farver et al., 2002; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Saxenian, 2002; Takaki, 1998; White, Biddlecom, & Guo, 1993), they invest a lot of parental human capital in their children. Moreover, the study concluded that immigrants use social capital to promote close intergenerational relationships and this influenced the academic achievements of the younger generation. Asian immigrants, in general, value close intergenerational relationships and promote deference and respect

for elders (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009; Dasgupta, 1998; Dundes et al., 2009). This study also revealed that the use of a mother tongue at home, which was different from the common language used outside the house, impacted academic achievement. The authors concluded that the use of a "minority language" in the home and a different language outside the home strengthened the overall path towards higher academic achievement. Abada and Tenkorang argue that the use of such a language "facilitates access to the social capital originating from a distinct ethnic identity" (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009). Asian Americans preserve their traditions and artifacts, including language, when they immigrate to the United States and they pass these languages and traditions on to their children (Farver et al., 2002; Rhee et al., 2003; Saw & Okazaki, 2010). While Abada and Tenkorang cite the importance of the minority language they also stress the need to communicate socially in the majority language to achieve academic success. This study pertains specifically to Canada but the conclusions can be generalized across the border to the United States since the cultures, languages and populations of the two countries are relatively similar.

PARENTAL CONFLICT

Frequent conflict between adolescents and parents is not uncommon. This can be particularly true in immigrant families due to cultural conflicts among parents and children (Baptiste, 2006; Farver et al., 2002; Sodowsky & Carey, 1988). This can occur due to difference in attitudes towards religion, culture, tradition and family values. This conflict can become rather pronounced among Asian Americans as bicultural values

come in contrast with native cultural values (Baptiste, 2006; Dasgupta, 1998; Garrod & Kilkenny, 2007; Omizo, 2008). In a study published in 2002, Farver, Narang, and Bhadha surveyed Asian Indian adolescents (*M*=16 years) in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. The sample (*N*=180) was comprised of both male (*n*=81) and female (*n*=90) Asian Indian individuals who were born in the United States. The purpose of the study was to ascertain how parents influenced acculturation, ethic-identity formation, assimilation and psychological functioning of adolescents. Both the adolescents and their parents completed the questionnaire. Using a quantitative research design, this study revealed unique information about Asian Indians. None of the participants identified themselves as American in the ethnic-identity section. This study found that, among Asian Indians, the core family unit influences acculturation and enculturation. Parents "set the tone" (Farver et al., 2002) for their children in bridging and navigating the gap between the two cultures – the host culture and the native culture.

Rhee, Janet, and Rhee (2003) compared the link between acculturation and cross-generation communication in Asian American and Caucasian adolescents living in the same neighborhood, and found that Asian Americans reported more communication breakdowns with their parents than their Caucasian peers. The study used a sample of 189 adolescents consisting of Asian Americans (*n*=99) and Caucasian Americans (*n*=90). The researchers collected data on level of acculturation, openness in communication with parents, self-esteem, and GPA. The investigation revealed that the Caucasian students were more assertive when expressing their goals and desires to their parents than the

Asian Americans. Moreover, Asian Americans were not as expressive as the Caucasians. The authors found that, in this sample, Asian Americans reported difficulty in discussing issues and problems with their parents. In addition, the Asian American students indicated that parents voiced some things that "would be better left unsaid" (Rhee et al., 2003). A further analysis revealed that these students felt the need to exert care when communicating with their parents for fear of saying the wrong things. Asian American students responded that they had a harder time communicating with their fathers instead of their mothers and even went on to report insulting responses from their fathers. The study concluded that Asian American students were "significantly less open in communicating with their parents as compared to their Caucasian counterparts" (Rhee et al., 2003). This study suggested that intergenerational relations are a stressor in Asian American adolescents (e.g. Chu, 2001; Das & Kemp, 1997; Farver et al., 2002; Gloria & Ho, 2003; Tewari, 2002; Ying, Coombs, & Lee, 1999; Zhou, 1997).

FAMILY INTERDEPENDENCE

Family interdependence is a cultural attribute that is unique to immigrants from certain areas, which may not be so pronounced in native-born American families. Young adults are obligated, in Asian cultures, to provide emotional and instrumental support to their families, which may not be so in Western cultures (Castillo, Conoley, & Brossart, 2004; Chandras et al., 1999; Tseng, 2004). Asian American youth also strive to live up to family expectations of high academic achievement (Dundes et al., 2009; Tseng, 2004). Academic success is seen as more of a family obligation rather than an independent,

internal end in itself (Dundes et al., 2009; Keshishian et al., 2010). The main motivational force in immigrants, particularly Asian Americans, is an extrinsic force: the family. Tseng (2004) questions whether high academic achievement in college translates to high success in college. Tseng goes on to stress that, while in college, students from immigrant families may seek independence and autonomy from the family much like their Western counterparts.

In 2004, Tseng published the results of a study that examined family interdependence across ethnic groups and its implications for academic success across ethnic groups. This study was chosen for this literature review, as the majority of the samples of this study were Asian Americans, followed by Caucasians, African Americans and Latinos. This was one of the handfuls of studies conducted on college students; all the rest focused on K-12 environments. This study measured the attitudes towards family obligations, behavioral demands from the family, and academic motivation among a sample of 998 college students. The study found that Asian Americans students gave higher importance to family obligations than the other groups. The family demands on Asian Americans students were higher than those on the other ethnic groups studied. The family obligation among Asian Americans was the primary motivator to succeed in academics. This conclusion affirmed earlier studies about the role of the family in the Asian American model minority experience (e.g. Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Espiritu, 2001; Farver et al., 2002; Gloria & Ho, 2003; Jambunathan & Counselman, 2002; E. S. Lee & Rong, 1988; Rhee et al., 2003).

Several researchers have reported on culture value conflict among Asian American adolescents and how this leads to emotional stress and intergenerational discord (Asher, 2008; Das & Kemp, 1997; Dundes et al., 2009; Espiritu, 2001; Farver et al., 2002; Gupta, 1997; Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Sandhu, 1997; Kallivayalil, 2004; S. Lee et al., 2009; Ly, 2008; Saw & Okazaki, 2010; Sodowsky & Carey, 1988). In an article published in *Sex Roles* in 2009, Varghese and Jenkins reported the findings of a study that examined family dynamics among Asian Indian women. This study was conducted on 73 adult women between the ages of 18 through 63 and reported on the impact of parental overprotection on self-esteem and depression. Forty one percent of the participants were current students and thus this study gave an important insight into the intergenerational dynamics of female Asian Indian college students. The study concluded that first-generation immigrant women, who were born in India and immigrated to the US, exerted more parental control over their daughters born in the US than their own mothers did. This parental overprotection generated culture value conflict among the younger generation and later led to depressive symptoms in their children. The second-generation women reported communication problems with parents regarding Western behaviors such as dating, pre-marital sex, school achievement, and arranged marriage. These findings are consistent with other studies that have reported similar conflicts (e.g. Garrod & Kilkenny, 2007; Isaksen, 1997; Julian et al., 1994; Pangamala & Plummer, 1998; Ramdya, 2009; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Saran, 2007; Sodowsky & Carey, 1988).

Although there are many within group differences in Asian Americans, one thread remains common – there are very few cultural differences in parenting, and parents from different cultural sub-groups are actually quite similar (Julian et al., 1994). Ethnic group approval has been found to be very important to all Asian Americans across sub-cultural lines (Inman et al., 2007). This group is also keenly aware of how the rest of the members are viewing them. Their feeling of security comes from acceptance within the larger group. It is this need for acceptance that drives how Asian Americans identify themselves and also their parenting style.

Saran (2007) examined how the complexities of the model minority phenomena impacted the experiences of Asian Indian students in an ethnographic study that employed a phenomenological hermeneutic framework. Saran investigated family influences on academic achievement by studying the downsides of positive stereotyping. Using a cross-generational research design, Saran studied the influence parents had on the academic achievement of their children as well as how the students negotiated the model minority identity construction.

Results of Saran's observations and interviews in three elite schools in New York City revealed that the model minority status had created identity issues for Asian Indian students. They were not white but they were considered "honorary Whites." Students equated being Indian with hard work, high grades and high teacher/parent expectations. Saran suggests that the students in the study came to school with rich cultural and social capital. However, Saran's study also revealed the dark side of the model minority label.

Students were constantly reconstructing their identity while dealing with the stress of being labeled as high achievers. The students were forced to fit into an identity "given to them by a dominant culture" (Saran, 2007, p. 76).

Saran (2007) also explored the attitudes of students who were rebelling against the model minority label, and against parental expectations. One such student lamented that when he received good grades he was ridiculed, teased and beaten up. He further stated, "Now I am bad. I behave like them and now they are scared of me. I do not care for my grades anymore" (Saran, 2007, p. 68). The study concluded that not all Asian Indian students are high achievers but only the stories of the successful students come to the surface. Since all the attention is on the high achievers, necessary services and assistance are denied to a large group of Asian American students who, despite their high academic achievements, are in need of mental health support. This group can only be defined as the "invisible minority." Consequently, this created a group that was left to fend for itself with no support systems to fall back upon.

Model Minority, Parental Conflict and Mental Health

Asian Indian students are caught in the crosshairs of family honor, parental expectations, community expectations and also living up to the label of the model minority. This can create considerable stress for the students.

In a 1993 article published in *The Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, Ramisetty-Mikler detailed the importance of religion and cultures among

Asian Indians and how this effects counseling seeking behaviors among Asian Indians. Asian Indians rely heavily on religion as a balancing force in their lives. Asian Indians, with deep-seated religious beliefs, have a difficult time adjusting to the value system in the Western world where the emphasis is more on individualism rather than collectivism (Dundes et al., 2009; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993). Researchers suggest that Asian immigrants feel constant pressure and stress from a sense of isolation or alienation from their native culture and their ability to assimilate completely in the host culture (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Sodowsky & Carey, 1988; Sodowsky, Kwan, & Pannu, 1995). Much of this stress comes from passing on cultural values to their children and ensuring that children follow the wishes of the parents with regards to academic major, career, and marriage (Das & Kemp, 1997; Farver et al., 2002; Inman et al., 2007; Keshishian et al., 2010; S. Lee et al., 2009; Saw & Okazaki, 2010; Song & Glick, 2004; Tewari, 2002). Among Asians, the family needs trump individual desires. Mikler and others (Atri & Sharma, 2006; Dundes et al., 2009; E. S. Lee & Rong, 1988; Stevenson & Stigler, 2006; Sue & Okazaki, 1990) argue that Asians seek education for improved social status and, for this reason, emphasize high academic achievement among their children.

Lorenzo et al. (2000) suggested that vast differences between the basic cultural values in the homes of Asian Indian American children and the value system that surrounded them in the dominant culture outside the home created parent/child conflict. The authors examined academic performance and the psychosocial functioning of Asian Americans. The academic and psychological functioning of 102 Asian adolescents

(seniors in high school) was compared to the same in their Caucasian peers by comparing the salient behaviors of both populations. The authors measured items that are likely to induce conflict or stress in either population: (a) academic accomplishment, (b) behavioral issues, (c) self-perceptions, (d) social support, and (e) family structure. The researchers reported that Asian American adolescents internalized behaviors far more often than their Caucasian peers. The data from this study, on the surface, affirmed the model minority stereotype as applied to Asian Americans as the Asian American students in this study performed far better than their Caucasian counterparts in academics. However, the study also revealed the dark side of the model minority myth showing that Asian Americans adolescents were more depressive, withdrawn, and had more social problems than their Caucasian peers. On the other hand, Asian American students reported more dismissive, prejudiced, and isolating behaviors by the Caucasians against them. The Asian American students also reported more interpersonal problems, negative self-perceptions, and a general feeling of lacking social support. Asian Americans reported another source of stress as being the attempt to reconcile Asian and Western cultural values.

The study conducted by Lorenzo et al. suggests that the high academic performance by Asian American students comes at the cost of their well-being. The academic achievements were due in large part to the parents being the driving force behind such an achievement. This goes in line with Deci and Ryan's (2000) theories of extrinsic motivation. This study was limited in scope as the sample included only high

school students and did not extend to college students. More research is needed to see if these academic achievements and negative feelings also transfer into life at college. Further, more research is needed to see how Asian Americans who are not performing as the model minority perceive their relationships with their core family unit and the community at large. Students who fail to live up to the model minority myth may feel stress and depression (McFadden, 2010).

In a study linking perfectionism and depressive symptoms, researchers Castro and Rice (2003) observed that Asian American students experienced extreme pressure from their parents regarding their academic performance. The researchers suggest that Asian American students may face harsh criticism from their parents if they fail to meet the academic expectations set forth by the parents. Thus, in order to avoid anger and criticism, many Asian American students may strive to seek perfection. This study, using quantitative methods of inquiry, sampled 59 Asian American, 65 African American, and 65 Caucasian students to examine a link between perfectionism and depressive symptoms among different ethnicities. The study revealed the increased fears that Asian American students had of making mistakes as compared to their Caucasian and African American counterparts. Asian American students in this study also revealed more self-doubt than their peers. The results of this study resembled what has been stated by researchers prior to this, related to Asian American parents applying pressure on their children to do well in academics using tactics such as guilt, criticism, punishment, and fear (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Chu, 2001; Das & Kemp, 1997; Farver et al., 2002; Isaksen, 1997;

Jambunathan & Counselman, 2002; Kitano, 1981; E. S. Lee & Rong, 1988; S. J. Lee, 1994; Lorenzo et al., 2000; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Schneider & Lee, 1990). While this quantitative study added to our knowledge about how Asian American students deal with parental pressure, it employed a small sample consisting of only 65 Asian Americans. Further, its measure of academic achievement was only based on GPA. Qualitative studies generally reveal richer stories in topics where the researcher wants to get to the emotional side of relationships.

Researchers have indicated that the family is the core unit among Asian Americans (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Baptiste, 2006; Farver et al., 2002). Further, studies indicate that family honor is paramount among Asian Americans Cultural factors shape how Asian Americans express their feelings and emotions. As mentioned earlier, academic success is considered paramount and can be the source for parent/child conflict in this community. It can also be the source of conflict within the immediate and extended family circle. Conflict may lead to depressive symptoms and, when these occur, Asian Americans prefer to deal with them through religion and family rather than counseling (Chandras et al., 1999; Das & Kemp, 1997; Gloria & Ho, 2003; Khanna et al., 2009; Ly, 2008; Omizo, 2008; Pangamala & Plummer, 1998; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Sodowsky & Carey, 1988; Tewari, 2002). Mikler (1993) found that, in many Asian cultures, counseling is only reserved for the seriously mentally ill and, thus, counseling in these cultures is frowned upon. Adolescents are taught to repress their feelings and to just "deal with it" (Butler et al., 2007; Das & Kemp, 1997; S. Lee et al., 2009; Maddux et

al., 2008). Religion and family are meant to be sources of strength (Conrad & Pacquiao, 2005). Since the structure in Asian American families is rigidly hierarchical, the elders and the family members control adolescents. Mikler (1993) claims that shame and guilt are used as the main vessels of social control within the family.

A study conducted by Conrad and Pacquiao (2005) examined the cultural responses to depression among Asian Indians. This qualitative study interviewed 23 caregivers at a psychiatric care facility, where a majority of the patients were Asian Indians, to learn the attitudes of the clients and their families towards depression in a cultural context. The study found that religious conviction, family roles, family status, age, and gender are all important factors in understanding the response to depression. Denial was a common response. The findings suggested that both patients and family members believed that depression was a punishment for past bad deeds. If the disease was faith based then the cure should be faith based as well, as the findings suggested. Although this study was conducted at a mental health facility, the findings are important for dealing with students at a collegiate level. The cultural factors and underpinnings remain the same for students in college and counselors must be trained to understand the psychosocial constraints with which students from Asian American backgrounds deal. Such a study needs to be conducted on college students to see what stressors they face as they find themselves confronted by academic and social challenges on the campus. These students may not have the internal resources to help them deal with these challenges.

The pressure to succeed, to adhere to the model minority label, to honor the family, and acculturative stress can induce suicide ideation among Asian Americans (Leong et al., 2007; McFadden, 2010). Leong et al. (2007) claim that studying students in the campus environment is important as suicide is the main cause of death for Asian Americans between the ages of 15 and 24. Further, the scholars claim, that the model minority myth has trivialized the true mental and social issues that may be faced by students in this age group. Leong et al. go on to argue that when the parent/child conflict is high, such as the pressure to succeed in an academic setting, the risk for suicidal behavior rises. At Cornell University, eight of the 14 suicides between 1997 and 2007 were committed by Asian Americans (Ly, 2008).

Parental conflict does not pertain just to academic performance. Research suggests that Asian American parents exert considerable influence over academic choices in their children, including choice of college and major. In a study published in 2009, Dundes, Cho, and Kwak used an online survey method to assess the level of involvement Asian American parents had in their children's college and major choices. The results suggested that Asian American parents valued prestige, honor, and community and family approval over their children's happiness when it came to college and major choice. Parents used guilt and family honor to remind students of the importance in major choice and academic success. Asian American students felt they had little choice in college and major selection. Asian Americans parents, according to the results of the study, were more likely to emphasize economic independence in career choices. Thus,

this ties back to the Relative Functionalism theory proposed by Sue and Okazaki (1990) mentioned earlier. The authors state that the result of this pressure translates into negative, depressive feelings and suicide ideation. This study only pertained to major and college choice. It did not reveal how students describe their interactions with their parents on a day-to-day basis on academic and socio-academic matters during their freshmen or sophomore years in college.

Gaps In The Research

While the studies listed above address issues of parent-child conflict and mental stress among Asian American students, there are sizeable gaps in the research. Most of the studies on Asian Americans focus on the K-12 population and there are only a handful of studies that examine the parental interactions of college students. Among Caucasian students, entry to college traditionally translates to autonomy from the core family unit and parents. However, this does not seem to be the case for Asian American students. Since the Asian Indian American population is so highly visible on the academic, entrepreneurial, and political scene, it is imperative to fill the gaps in the literature related to this segment of the population. A majority of the studies investigate both the parents and the children. There are very few studies that examine only student perceptions of parent-child conflict.

Asian Americans, as a group, are severely under-researched (S. D. Museus & M. J. Chang, 2009). Museus and Chang (2009) inform us that it is imperative to increase the

body of literature available about Asian Americans in order to (a) demystify the model minority myth, (b) provide culturally sensitive interventions to students in need, (c) identify the mental health risk factors related to cultural issues, (d) expose the within-group differences in Asian Americans and (e) study a population that is growing at a high rate in the United States. From a review of the relevant literature, I now transition on to the theoretical framework that will guide the interview protocol and the data analysis of this proposed study.

Theoretical Framework

This study examined complex, multi-dimensional issues related to Asian Indian American undergraduate students' relationship with their parents. Through in-depth interviews, I gathered students' perspectives on being a member of the model minority, intergenerational conflict, the parenting styles they experienced in the family, family interdependence, mental stress and the strategies for coping with this stress. Considering the complexity and multiple layers of depth that were explored in this study, I employed multiple theories. Hence, I present a combination of theories that will be used to analyze and situate the data within the existing research.

Family Communication Orientation and Parenting Styles

This study examined how Asian Indian American students communicate with their parents regarding their academic choices. I used two theories to inform my research

about parenting styles and communication styles. Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) proposed a typology of family communication patterns. While the entire typology is better suited for a study dedicated to communication theory, I drew on the top level of this typology to guide and root the parenting theories. The two orientations that Koerner and Fitzpatrick propose are *conformity* and *conversation*.

Koerner and Fitzpatrick define conformity orientation as "the degree to which family communication stresses a climate of homogeneity of attitudes, values, and beliefs." (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 85). In families that practice conformity orientation, the "intergenerational exchanges…[reflect] obedience to parents and other adults. Associated with high conformity orientation is the belief in what might be called a traditional family structure. In this view, families are "cohesive and hierarchical" (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 86). In these traditional family structures, individual family members are expected to sacrifice and subordinate their personal interests to the interests and beliefs of the family. The decision-making is left to the parents and it becomes the child's job to act according to the wishes of the parents. In contrast, families that use conversation orientation are open and there is extreme respect for each individual. All decisions are family decisions and children are given a fair amount of autonomy (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

Asian Indian American families seem to adhere more to a conformity orientation pattern of communication, as the family structure is hierarchical and traditional (Ang & Goh, 2006; Farver et al., 2002; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993). The children are likely to listen

to the parents and respect the decisions parents have made for them. Children are also expected to sacrifice their own happiness for the sake of the family name and family honor (Dundes et al., 2009).

I now shift the focus to parenting styles. Baumrind (1971) lays out a typology that includes three distinct parenting styles: *authoritative*, *authoritarian* and *permissive*.

Baumrind (1971) proposes that the *authoritative* parenting leads to children who are "self-reliant, self-controlled, explorative, and content" (p. 1). Although authoritative parents are demanding, they allow the child enough autonomy to develop a deep sense of self-confidence and self-security. Authoritative parents exercise moderate control over their children's choices and activities while at the same time offering a nurturing environment that allows the child to develop and blossom (Baumrind, 1971).

The second parenting style that Baumrind expounds is the *authoritarian* style that leads to children who are "discontent, withdrawn, and distrustful" (p. 2). The authoritarian parent expects the child to adhere to an absolute standard, which could be motivated by religion or spiritual norms. The child is forced to suppress his or her own wishes in deference to tradition and the family happiness. The authoritarian parent expects the child to accept the wish of parents without questioning or argument (Baumrind, 1971).

Permissive parents, the last category, do not attempt to control the behavior of the child like the authoritative and authoritarian parent. Nor does the permissive parent set limits for the child and offers no structure. The child is free to do as they choose within

the family rules. Children of permissive parents are "least self-reliant, explorative, and self-controlled" (p. 2). The parents exercise no power over the child; rather they try to control the child's behavior through reasoning and dialog (Baumrind, 1971).

Baumrind does not address the impact of culture and social structure on parenting styles. Further, she does not speculate whether a style that is considered acceptable in one culture would be unacceptable in another. While Baumrind's theory provides a sound theoretical foundation to define parenting styles and how these might influence the manner in which a child interacts with the parents, still among the Asian American population other factors such as collectivism and family honor must be considered to see how they impact not only the parenting style chosen but also intergenerational communication.

Among Asian Indian American families, the authoritarian parenting style is more prevalent as has been revealed in prior studies (Ang & Goh, 2006; Dundes et al., 2009; Farver et al., 2002; Ly, 2008; Tewari, 2002). As stated earlier, children are expected to defer to the wishes of the parents. Children are not expected to argue with the parent or show an attempt towards autonomy from the parents (Baptiste, 2006; Khurana, 2008; Salam, 2010).

FAMILY HONOR

A last remaining piece in the theoretical framework is family *honor*. At the heart of intergenerational conflict in Asian Americans is the need to preserve the family

reputation. A child's academic and professional achievement is considered critical to maintaining the family name (Dundes et al., 2009). Since Asian cultures are collectivist in nature "a child's accomplishments reflect more about the worth of the family than the individual…[parents] socialize their children to achieve academic prowess for the sake of family honor…[they] prioritize prestige over the happiness [of their children]" (Dundes et al., 2009, p. 136).

As the theoretical framework and the reviewed literature reveal, the model minority is a complex construct. While there are positives to being the model minority there also is a permeable membrane that can allow the members of this population to cross over to the dark side of this label by inducing stress, anxiety and, sometimes even the worst, suicide. Family and community approval are both very important to Asian Indian American parents. An authoritarian parenting style, combined with a need to protect family honor, lead to intergenerational conflict. A difference in cultural value adoption between the first and second generation also leads to intergenerational conflict. These factors, together, become stressors that generate significant stress for the children. The children feel a need to live up to a certain label or standard. An actual or perceived inability to live up the high expectations of both parents and community, leads to further stress thus perpetuating a cycle of high expectations and the resultant stress. Based on my research I present the model that illustrates the interplay of influencing factors on the second-generation children of first generation Asian Indian immigrants. An illustration of this model is presented in figure 1 below:

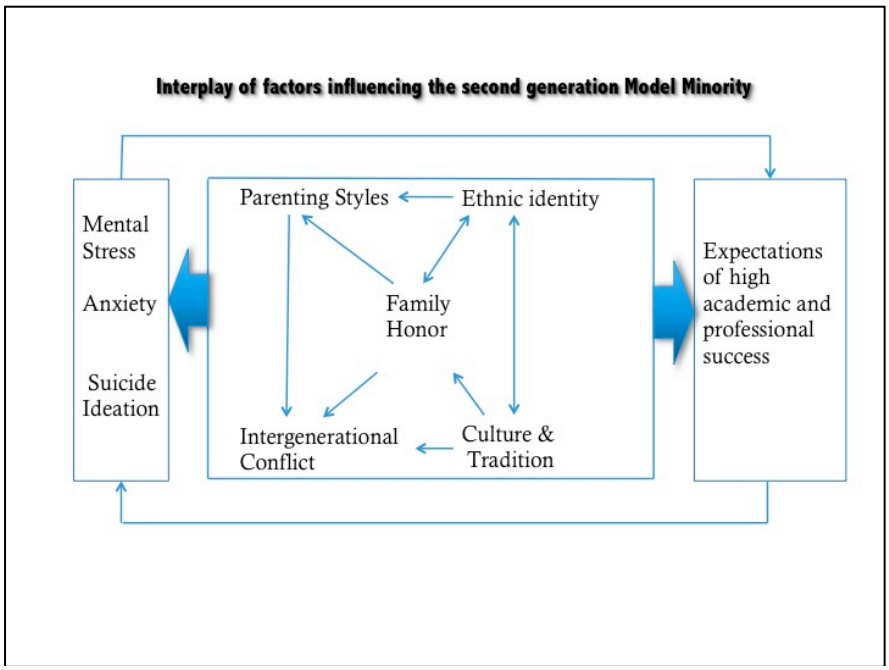

Figure 1. A model to represent an interplay of factors influencing the second-generation model minority. These factors lead to stress and anxiety on one end and expectations of high achievement on the other.

Summary

The model minority label has led to a group of Asian Americans becoming the invisible minority. In the stark glare of the model minority label, a dark shadow hides the needs of the invisible minority. The suicide rate among this population is high, there is an inclination to reject mental health services and there is a predisposition for students to keep stressors hidden (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Chandras et al., 1999; Ibrahim et al., 1997; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2009; Leong et al., 2007; Ly, 2008; McFadden, 2010; Pangamala & Plummer, 1998; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Yoo et al., 2010).

As the literature suggests, many Asian American students are under stress from parental and family pressure to succeed at school. The vast majority of the extant literature on Asian American student achievement and parental influence pertains to the K-12 population. In addition, Asian Indian Americans are virtually absent from this conversation. The current study addressed this gap by examining intergenerational conflict related to academic choices and performance among Asian Indian Americans.

Further research is necessary to continue the conversation about this second-generation population. Much of the scholarship about Asian Indian Americans is in the area of identity development and acculturation and a vast majority addresses the first-generation. The Asian Indian American population is a young immigrant group. After all, family immigration started in earnest after the 1965 Hart-Cellar act. A body of literature needs to be built up about this generation so as to break the stereotypes and start a new conversation besides just the model minority.

Furthermore, research similar to this study, is vital to provide culturally sensitive information to student affairs professionals on campus. Such information can enable them to tailor interventions that are best suited for the Asian Indian American population. Findings of studies, such as the current one, will also enable them to understand these students in a holistic manner as opposed to just viewing them as a model minority that has limited special needs.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

> I choose to use my own mind. I do not need your mind. I want to experience you, listen to you – not to myself. I have already heard everything I have to say. You are what is novel about this conversation.
> - Hugh Prather

The purpose of this study was to gather narratives, using a qualitative, phenomenological research design, from undergraduate Asian Indian American students at a flagship university in the Southwestern United States about their relationships with their parents in the narrowly focused area of academic achievement and academic expectations. I interviewed eight participants in order to extract rich descriptions to get an in-depth understanding of the manner is which students report and negotiate academic performance and choices with their parents. A qualitative study provided the participants an opportunity to narrate their lived experiences as second-generation Asian Indian undergraduate students at a competitive research university. In this chapter I will lay out the details about the research methodology, site selection, sample selection, the data collection method, and the ethical considerations of the study.

As previewed in Chapter 1, the aim of this study was to answer the following research questions:

1. How do undergraduate second-generation Asian Indian American students at an elite, selective public university in the Southern United States describe their

interactions with their parents with regards to their academic performance and academic choices?

2. What stressors, if any, do second-generation Asian Indian American students identify when interacting with their parents?
3. What strategies do these students use to alleviate the mental stress, if any, from their communication with their parents about their academic performance and choices?

Selecting a Qualitative Approach

Quantitative and qualitative methods are used to address different goals and different problems (J. A. Maxwell & Loomis, 2002). Although quantitative methods are appropriate for understanding the role of a particular variable in a phenomena, qualitative methods are important to gain an in-depth understanding of the how, why, what and where of individual and group actions (Museus, 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) inform us that qualitative research is a "situated activity…that consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible" (2000). Ritchie and Lewis (2007) assert that qualitative research is a "naturalistic, interpretive approach concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena (actions, decisions, beliefs, values etc.) within their social worlds" (p.3).

Qualitative research allows the researcher to select small, purposefully identified samples and allows close contact between the researcher and the sample. Further, this

methodology allows the researcher to collect data which are "very detailed, information rich and extensive" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2007). Qualitative research is largely interpretive rather than positivist. The researcher has to understand phenomena and behavior through the lens of the participants and through the researcher's own perspectives (Ritchie & Lewis, 2007). My decision to situate this study as a qualitative study is thus affirmed.

Phenomenology

Qualitative research is hardly simple and linear; it is a complex field consisting of many different methods. This study was a qualitative, phenomenological study. Phenomenology is defined as being:

> Interested in elucidating both that which appears and the manner in which it appears. It studies the subjects' perspectives of their world; attempts to describe in detail the content and structure of the subjects' consciousness, to grasp the qualitative diversity of their experiences and to explicate their essential meanings. (Kvale, 1996, as quoted in Willig, 2007, p. 210)

A phenomenologist tries to understand the world from the point of view of the person experiencing it. Rather than examining the world through the eyes of the researcher, phenomenology focuses on the conscious experience of the participants. This experience includes the emotions of the person going through the experience, as well as their judgments and their perceptions. Cohen, Lawrence, Morrisson and Morrisson (2007) propose that, in its broadest sense, phenomenology is:

> A theoretical point of view that advocates the study of direct experience taken at face value; and one which sees behaviour as determined by the phenomena of experience rather than by external, objective and physically described reality. (p. 22)

Connelly (2010) and Guignon (2012) indicate that there are two main approaches in phenomenology: *descriptive* and *interpretive*, the former developed by Austrian philosopher Edmund Husserl and the latter by German philosopher Martin Heidegger. While the descriptive approach brackets out pre-suppositions and assumptions to reduce researcher bias, interpretivists take a different stance. Interpretive phenomenology, also known as hermeneutic phenomenology, assumes that "human phenomena are always meaning-laden…any attempt to understand such phenomena must grasp the …meanings inhabiting what presents itself as experience" (Guignon, 2012, p. 98). Hermeneutic phenomenology believes that it is difficult to shun any presuppositions as they are an integral part of the researcher and the researcher can "only be aware of them and any effect they have on the study" (Connelly, 2010, p. 127).

While naturalism is an objective approach leading to testable generalizations, hermeneutic phenomenology believes that the "human is meaning-laden, defined by the significances that it absorbs from its socio-historical context" (Guignon, 2012, p. 99). For this study I draw upon Heidegger's wisdom about the enculturation practices of people in their community and what Heidegger describes as "average everydayness" (Guignon, 2012) Guignon (2012) explains this further as:

> Much of what we do in what he [Heidegger] calls ''average everydayness'' is conditioned by our enculturation into the practices and forms of life of a particular community – the ''They'' [das Man] into which we find ourselves thrown. For the most part in our everyday lives, we do what ''one'' [man] does according to the norms and standards laid by the ''anyone'' of which we are a member… In the process of this enculturation, we become so tuned in to the everyday ways of doing things that much of our lives take the form of doing what ''one does,''

> running on automatic, going with the flow. As essentially being-with others, we tend to become fairly typical representatives of the They. (p. 101)

Hermeneutic phenomenology rejects the assertion of positivism that there is but one truth; rather the research process is free of presumptive conclusions. It is inevitably and eventually an evolving, interpretive, subjective process that seeks to identify the participants' perceptions at any given period of time. To make this a more interpretive, interactive process, I identified myself as an insider to the participants and allowed them to ask me questions about my Indian-ness and my beliefs about the Asian Indian model minority experience. Being an insider to the Asian Indian community placed me in a unique position to understand the culture, the traditions and, thus, made the interviews richer. Although closeness can produce bias, Ritchie and Lewis (2007) posit:

> Sharing some aspects of the cultural background or experience may be helpful in enriching researchers' understanding of participants' accounts, of the language they use and of the nuances and subtexts. The researchers perceptions should not be a substitute for the participants' own words but they can help researchers make judgements on how to explore issues in more depth. (p. 65)

While the researcher is the instrument for research in qualitative research, they must check their subjectivity and bias while still trying to establish a rapport with the participants (Glesne, 2006; J. A. Maxwell, 2005). As a phenomenological researcher, I was aware of any biases that I brought to the research and ensured that these did not impact the neutrality of the study. Each interview and phenomena being observed must be approached with an open mind and with a fresh perspective. I exercised caution not to deduce meanings from the participants' narratives before I analyzed the data that was collected from the in-depth interviews.

Overview of the Research Design

I will now list the other key elements of the research design including site selection, sample selection and size, and ethical issues. As well, profiles of the participants are presented in this section.

SITE AND SAMPLING

Site. This study was conducted at Southern State University, an elite research university in the Southwestern United States. While this was a familiar site to me, the reasons for choosing the university as a site ran deeper than just familiarity. Admission into this university was very competitive with seventy three percent of the incoming freshman class coming from the top ten percent and ninety percent of the incoming class placed in the top quarter in their high school ("The Freshman Year," 2011). The university also had a sizeable Asian American population and at least 15 registered Asian Indian American student organizations. Roughly 25 percent of the students in Natural Sciences were Asian American, while less than one percent of the population in Undergraduate Studies were Asian American. The schools of Business and Pharmacy had 23 and 22 percent Asian Americans as their student population, while Geosciences had less than four percent Asian Americans ("2010-2011 Statistical Handbook Student Characteristics Fall 2010," 2011). This data extracted from the Statistical Handbook (2010) confirmed what the literature stated about popular majors among Asian Americans (see for example Keshishian et al., 2010; Song & Glick, 2004).

Sampling criteria and method. In a phenomenological study, it is imperative to obtain a sample of participants who are not only experienced with the phenomena the researcher wishes to investigate but also willing to talk about it in deep detail (Willig, 2007). Further, a purposefully selected sample ensures accuracy and validity of the results. For this study, finding a sample was a challenge. Although recruitment emails were sent to Asian Indian American student organizations, there were no responses from students enrolled in the organizations. I made an attempt to recruit through visits to the organizational meetings, but those visits were futile as well. Thus, the majority of the sample was recruited through snowball sampling, with one participant coming from a recruitment email. Ritchie and Lewis (2007) affirm that snowball sampling is an effective technique to be used in conjunction with purposeful sampling specially for "samples of specific minority ethnic groups" (pp. 94-95). The snowball sampling facilitated the participants' trust in me as they had heard my name from someone they knew. I was careful to communicate with participants by email or phone to ensure I was not getting a homogenous sample since it was imperative to get variety in the stories of the participants. This variety is evident in Chapter Four during the presentation of the data analysis and results. Participants were self-identified second-generation Asian Indian American undergraduate students. Even through snowball sampling, I was unable to reach any participants in the non-traditional areas such as Music and English Literature. Six participants were from the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math

(STEM) area, while one was from Business, and one from Liberal Arts. Five participants were female and three were male.

Sample size. Qualitative samples are generally small in size. Ritchie and Lewis (2007) assert that if rich qualitative data are analyzed properly there will be very limited new data yielded by each new sample unit (p. 83). Further, there is no requirement to ensure that the sample is of a certain scale given that qualitative research does not measure statistical significance (p. 83). Unlike quantitative studies, the aim of qualitative research is not to produce generalizable results rather to seek an in-depth answer to the research question(s). "An appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question…this might be in single figures" (Marshall, 1996). The qualitative research design must be flexible enough to vary the sample size as the study is in progress (Glesne, 2006; Marshall, 1996). The target sample size for this study was eight students. Since phenomenological studies are meant to study phenomena in-depth, it is critical to keep the sample size small. The sample size was informed by the research which stated that the phenomenological sample will be small because "the phenomenon is studied in fewer people, but more in depth than would be possible in a survey or other type of research" (Connelly, 2010, p. 127).

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

For this study, I interviewed eight participants – five female and three male. All of them are currently enrolled undergraduate students at Southern State University, an elite public university in the Southern United States. The participants are second

generation Americans; they were either born in the United States or moved to this country at a very young age. The parents of all the participants were born in India. Of the eight students that participated in this study, six were in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), one was a Liberal Arts major, and one was a Business major. The average GPA was approximately 3.5. Seven participants classified themselves as upper middle class and one classified herself as middle class. All of them lived either on campus or around campus; none lived at home. Except for two participants, both parents of the participants were employed in professional technical or management positions.

Prior to commencing the interviews, all participants were given a demographic information form to fill out. The participants were asked to identify various demographics related to academics including their current enrollment status, major, GPA, classification, the national origin of their parents, and verification that they were either born in the United States or moved here before they turned five. In addition to the aforementioned demographics, the form asked them to provide information on academic choices such as choice of university, choice of major, whether they lived on campus or with their parents. Six participants identified themselves as sophomores and two identified as juniors.

Each participant was asked to create his/her own pseudonym. There were no specific rules for creating these names. The profiles below list only the pseudonyms. In order to protect the identity of the participants, the exact major has not been identified.

Rather, the general area in which that major exists is identified as the major. Two participants had a double major and he/she requested that the second major not be listed for fear of being identified. As well, the names of high schools, colleges, and cities have been changed. The profiles listed below have been constructed using data from the demographic form that each participant was asked to fill out as well as from data collected during the interview process. A comprehensive participant profile is shown in the table below. The demographic form used is attached in Appendix B.

Table 1

Participant Profile Table

Name	Gender	Area of Study	Current GPA	Status	Economic status
Aishwarya	Female	Engineering Sciences	2.64	Sophomore	UMC
Chandrika	Female	Business	3.5	Sophomore	UMC
Gia	Female	Natural Sciences	4.0	Sophomore	UMC
Kira	Female	Natural Sciences	3.3	Junior	UMC
Paarth	Male	Natural Sciences	3.86	Junior	UMC
Priyanka	Female	Natural Sciences	4.0	Sophomore	MC
Shaan	Male	Liberal Arts	3.86	Sophomore	UMC
Sundar	Male	Engineering Sciences	3.1	Sophomore	UMC

Note: UMC = Upper Middle Class; MC = Middle Class
All names are pseudonyms chosen by the participant.

Aishwarya

Aishwarya is a junior enrolled in the Engineering Sciences. Aishwarya belongs to an upper middle class Asian Indian family. Aishwarya describes her family as being traditional. Aishwarya has an older sister. Both her parents are employed in white collar jobs. The gender roles are divided in the house by who participates in the her academic

life and who enforces the cultural rules. Aishwarya described her parents' roles as "Ministry of Education" and the "Cultural Ministry" and described her parents' involvement with her academics as follows: "For mom, as long as my grades are okay she won't really ask me any questions, she wouldn't really get involved. Dad, on the other hand, is very actively involved with the classes I take."

Aishwarya graduated from the honors program of a highly competitive high school. Aishwarya is deeply involved in various Indian cultural organizations at the university. She is immersed in traditional Indian dancing and singing, both on and off campus. Southern State University was her own choice and her current major in the Engineering Sciences area was partly her own choice. She is currently exploring other majors possibly outside the Engineering Sciences area and will make a decision before the Fall 2012. In addition to her busy schoolwork, Aishwarya occupies herself with singing, dancing, and she is on the executive board of a national Indian dance competition.

Chandrika

Chandrika is a sophomore in the general area of Business with a 3.5 GPA. Chandrika belongs to a very traditional upper middle class family that lives about 200 miles away from the university. She is an only child. Her family comes from a well-connected and well-known family in India. Thus, Chandrika stated that all actions are said to either enhance or denounce the family name. "Doing your duty and maintaining decorum in and out of the home, like Indian decorum in sense of dress as well" is very

important to Chandrika's parents. Chandrika's parents are both involved in her academics and cultural growth although her father is more involved in the academics and her mother moreso in the cultural.

Chandrika's father is employed in a white collar job while her mother is a homemaker. Chandrika stated, "[my mom] decided instead like she would make me her lifetime project." Southern State University was Chandrika's own choice; however, her parents were influential in helping her choose a major. Besides her studies, Chandrika keeps herself occupied with singing, dancing, volunteering, and event organizing.

Gia

Gia is a sophomore in the Natural Sciences area with a 4.0 GPA. Her school choice was a collective decision between she and her parents. She belongs to a middle class family and both her parents are employed in white collar jobs. Her father helps her more with academics, but they both pass on cultural values "fairly equally." Academic success has always been highly stressed in her house, as Gia recounted: "On top of our homework, we were encouraged to do extra practice problems and [other things] so academics was always stressed."

Gia describes her parents as a "good mix between traditional and modern." She described her family as being extremely supportive and her relationship with her family appeared to be very balanced and without any conflict. Gia has a younger brother. Besides her academic workload, Gia she loves to paint and tutor children.

Kira

Kira, a sophomore in the Natural Sciences area with a 3.3 GPA, belongs to an upper middle class family; both her parents are engineers. The decision to join Southern State University was a joint one between her and her parents; however, Kira's major was of her own choosing. Before she settled on the current university and current major she struggled to come to a decision. Kira recalled, "When I was applying to college I think every single one of my applications had a different major chosen." Kira says she felt no particular pressure from her parents to choose a major; all they wanted was something that would lead her to a stable, well-paying, white collar job. Besides her studies, Kira is involved with event sponsorship and an organization that sets up students with internships abroad. She also loves to bike whenever she has time. Off-campus, Kira is involved in a religious organization where she teaches classes.

Paarth

Paarth was born in India but moved to the United States at a very young age. He went back to India when he was in middle school for a few years to a boarding school. He is currently a junior in the Natural Sciences area with a 3.83 GPA. Paarth's major and Southern State University were of his own choosing.

Paarth belongs to a middle class family and has a younger brother. He describes his family as traditional. Paarth says "I am close to my brother than anyone else probably, yeah I tell him anything like pretty much anything." His father is employed in a white collar job while his mother is a homemaker. He stated that his mother never

attended college so his main academic discussions take place with his father. Paarth describes his parents as "traditional in all regards." In his spare time, Paarth serves as the editor of a South Asian magazine on campus.

Priyanka

Priyanka, who was born in the United States, returned to India when she entered high school and completed high school in India. She is a sophomore in the Biological Sciences with a 4.0 GPA. Priyanka describes herself as a person who loves to learn - "I am always determined to get an A whether my parents told me to or not. I love learning." She transferred to Southern State University after a year at a university in the Northern United States. Her major and the university are both of her own choosing.

Priyanka's parents are both employed in white collar jobs- her mother lives in the Southern United States and her father lives in India. She identifies herself as middle class. She has two older sisters and a younger brother. Both her parents are equally involved in her academics although she says "but I think my mom is more involved with my academics compared to my dad. My dad holds more weight towards cultural values and traditions." Besides her school work, Priyanka is involved with an Indian charity organization and a club for aspiring medical students. She also plays tennis and enjoys running.

Shaan

Shaan is a sophomore with a 3.86 GPA in the Liberal Arts area. He identifies himself as upper middle class. His father is employed in a white collar job while his mother is a scientific entrepreneur. He has a younger brother, and Shaan discussed how his parents have always stressed excellence in academics, saying, "I think there was a real emphasis on learning, and you know, getting truly grasping something from class if a teacher didn't explain it well my mom would try and read the chapter with me at home or something like that." Shaan informed me through email, "Both of my parents have helped my brother and me with academics. Both of my parents work, and they both cook/do housework…academically, both of my parents have almost always been involved."

Shaan is very involved in an Indian cultural organization on campus. He is also part of a fusion dance group that merges Indian and hip-hop dance. He enjoys tennis, running, and "spending time with friends."

Sundar

Sundar is a sophomore in the Engineering Sciences area with a 3.1 GPA. He belongs to an upper middle class family, which he says is "at the upper end of upper middle class." The university was a joint decision between him and his parents while the major choice was his alone. Sundar's parents are both employed in white collar jobs. He also has a younger brother.

Sundar comes from a traditional family. In his own words "I've made clear distinctions from them and so has my brother about some of our beliefs, some of our

culture… but I would say that my parents are definitely more of the traditional way." He enjoys singing, dancing, and is very involved in photography as a hobby.

Data Collection

In this section I will detail the procedures I followed prior to and during data collection.

BOARD APPROVAL

Prior to conducting the study, the necessary approvals were obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Southern State University for conducting this research. There was no outside research required since I was only interviewing students at this school. In order to obtain the approval the required steps listed on the IRB web site at http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/ were followed. The sample selection and data collection commenced after I received the required approvals.

THE INTERVIEW

Several data collection methods can be used in a qualitative study including observations, surveys, mail interviews, email interviews and case study research. Ritchie and Lewis (2007) distinguish between naturally occurring and generated data. They state that:

> Generated methods involve reconstruction and require re-processing and retelling of attitudes, beliefs, behavior or other phenomena…Generated data give insight into people's own perspectives on and interpretations into their behaviors – and, most crucially, an understanding of the meaning that they attach to them. These methods…provide the only means of understanding certain psychological

> phenomena, such as motivations, beliefs, decision processes, but also because they allow participants' reflections on, and understanding of, social phenomena to be gained. (p. 36)

Interviews provide the researcher with rich data since "the expressive power of language provides the most important resource for accounts. A crucial factor of language is its capacity to present descriptions, explanations and evaluations of almost infinite variety about any aspect of the world, including itself" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Interviews can be strictly structured, semi-structured or unstructured: the highly structured interview ensures that all the necessary information is captured whereas an unstructured interview allows new phenomena to be revealed during the interview process (Museus, 2007). A semi-structured approach provides an ideal balance allowing the researcher to keep some order while allowing unexpected themes to emerge from the interview and then addressing these themes with follow-up questions (Patton, 2002).

Given that the current study was focused on the perceptions of a few, purposefully selected students, the most effective data collection approach was utilizing individual semi-structured interviews, which "provide an opportunity for detailed investigation of people's personal perspectives" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2007 p. 36). Seidman (1998) further states that:

> The purpose of the in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses, and not to "evaluate" as the term is normally used…At the root of the in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning that they make of that experience. (p. 3)

Since this was a phenomenological study, the in-depth, semi-structured interview was the data collection method. The use of open-ended questions allowed me to gather

rich stories and thick descriptions of the phenomena. Further, the interview technique enabled me to probe deeper than if I had used a questionnaire and surveys alone. Seidman (1998) notes that, in a phenomenological approach, researchers "use primarily open-ended questions. Their major task is to build upon and explore their participants' responses to these questions." (p. 9).

My interview strategy was based on a modified version of Seidman's "Three-Interview Series" protocol. Seidman (1998) proposed that a phenomenological study should consist of three 90-minute interviews spaced three to seven days apart (pp. 11 – 15). He recommends that the first interview be a focused life history, the second interview should glean the details of the experience, and the third interview should focus on the reflection of the meaning. Although I followed Seidman's interview techniques, my interview protocol was based on Reddick's (2007) research design. Using Reddick's approach, I conducted two in-depth, open-ended, phenomenological interviews with each participant.

Prior to the start of the first interview, participants were assured of confidentiality and were asked to sign an informed consent. Following Reddick's (2007) interview design and Seidman's (1998) protocol, my first interview helped me establish rapport, collect life-histories and probe into the participants' experiences as an Asian Indian American model minority. Further, I asked the participants basic questions about their experiences sharing their academic experiences with their parents, community, and peers.

The second interview was also a semi-structured interview. The focus of this interview was to concentrate on the participants' experiences as they described their interactions with their parents about academic choices and academic performance. The first part of the interview asked deep details about these experiences. Through questions, I elicited details about the effect of these interactions or these conflicts on the student. Further, I asked for concrete details about how the students alleviated the mental stress, if any, caused directly by these communications with their parents. The second part of this interview also encouraged the students to assign meanings to their experiences.

A portion of the interview questions were fixed, open-ended questions whereas others were more casual, conversational questions developed on the spot.

The instrument. For these interviews, I employed a modified version of the instrument used by Khurana (2008) in her phenomenological study about intergenerational conflict among Asian Indian American adults. As well, I incorporated portions of Chakrabarti's (2008) instrument from her study on Asian Indian American middle school students (Chakrabarti, 2008). The Khurana study focused on adults between the ages of 23 and 29. This instrument has been field-tested and it was used successfully in a completed study.

Interview logistics. The approximately 90-minute long interviews were recorded on a digital recorder. Prior to each interview, the researcher obtained informed consent from the participant in accordance with institutional IRB guidelines. The transcripts were

shared with the individual participants to test the trustworthiness and accuracy of the data.

The setting for the interview had to be a carefully selected so that the interviewee would feel comfortable. Most of the interviews were conducted in a private or group study room at the university library. One interview was conducted in a neighborhood park at the request of the participant. The first key consideration in choosing a venue was a place where the participants would feel most comfortable narrating their stories to me. A second important consideration was to choose a location where there would be minimal distractions for both the interviewee and the interviewer.

Data Analysis

The raw data was coded and analyzed using a Qualitative Data Analysis Software System (QDAS) such as Atlas.ti, NVivo or HyperResearch. While there is no substitute for researcher analysis and intuitive observation, the QDAS enabled me to extract rich descriptions and intricate details from the transcriptions. Using QDAS, data was sorted and analyzed by themes.

Seidman (1998) cautions that "in-depth interviewing generates an enormous amount of text" (p. 99). The analysis of a phenomenological interview is a recursive process of reading and re-reading the transcripts. Using inductive methods, the researcher can isolate meaningful information in the text. It is imperative that the transcripts must be approached with an open mind and an "open attitude" (Seidman,

1998, p. 100). As the researcher analyzes the data, he/she must allow themes and sub-themes to emerge which are then clustered into overarching thematic areas (Connelly, 2010). Thus, in keeping with the phenomenological research method, each transcript was analyzed individually. From each transcript, I extracted themes, key phrases and words that were related to the phenomenon. This was an evolutionary and recursive process until no further themes could be extracted. The themes that emerged from individual transcripts were then integrated to form overarching themes. While integrating the themes, the first step was to create clusters of themes that were shared by all participants. Next, I identified themes that are shared by some but not all the participants. Last, I isolated the themes that are unique to single participants. Finally, a descriptive document was produced that provided a rich and deep description of the phenomenon under observation.

VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

To establish validity and trustworthiness, I followed the measures outlined by researchers such as Ritchie and Lewis (2007), Maxwell (2005), and Glesne (2006). One of the methods I used was a feedback loop or member validation. To accomplish this, I returned the transcript to the participant for verification. Glesne (2006) argues that member validation,:

> While being time-consuming [will help] verify that you have reflected their perspectives…[will] inform you of the sections that, if published could be problematic for either personal or political reasons…could help you develop new ideas and interpretations. (p. 167)

I also presented my findings to my methodologist on a regular basis not just as a form of validation but also to find "alternate interpretations" (R. Reddick, 2011).

Role of the Researcher

I must acknowledge my participants for their willingness to share with me stories they would not share with their best friends. I am also grateful to them for entrusting me with this information. The participants left an impression on me with their devotion to their families and their own drive for success. Further, the depth of the struggle, described by most of the students, to merge two dichotomous worlds and cultures reminded me of my own struggles to integrate myself into a new culture after moving to the United States. At the beginning of the study, I was apprehensive about the data I would be able to collect. I imagined I was fighting the "aunty" syndrome since I was the same age as the parents of the participants. At the beginning of the study, I assumed this "aunty" syndrome was going to present as a challenge. However, I found those fears to be unfounded as my participants were willing to look past my age.

As an Asian Indian woman, I felt that I had an advantage with the participants because I was able to understand the cultural expectations that the students detailed. Additionally, as an Asian Indian mother of a 23 year old and a 20 year old, I was able to connect in a unique manner with the participants, as I understood the struggles and aspirations of their generation. My same Indian-ness that was an advantage also caused me to exercise caution so that I would not assign assumptions to the student narratives. I

had to be careful not to judge the narratives as a parent, rather I was careful to remain a neutral researcher.

Delimitations

The foremost limitation of this study was that it examined the perceptions of intergenerational relationships from the perspective of the child alone. While the students in this study provided rich examples of all facets of intergenerational communications related to their academic performance and choices, there was a dimension missing. The data in the study raised some questions about the perceptions of the parents. Including the phenomenological perceptions of the parents in a future study and then comparing the perceptions reported in both studies would greatly enhance the findings and enrich the literature.

While this study focused on intergenerational relationships in the focused area of academic choices and academic performance, there are many other areas in the life of an Asian Indian American teenager that impact intergenerational communication such as arranged marriage, dating, choice of friends, and acculturative stress for students. While the data in this study were very informative, future research focused on the areas listed would provide even richer information on this unique population.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to hear the perceptions and experiences of Asian Indian American students as they interacted with their parents regarding their academic performance and to learn if they felt any stress from these interactions. Using a phenomenological research design, the narratives of these students were captured using a

set of two interviews each. This raw data was then analyzed and the final results are detailed in Chapter Five while Chapter Four presents an analysis of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

What happens is not as important as how you react to what happens. - Thaddeus Golas.

The goal of this study was to examine the following research questions:

1. How do undergraduate second-generation Asian Indian American students at an elite, selective public university in the Southern United States describe their interactions with their parents with regards to their academic performance and academic choices?

2. What stressors, if any, do second-generation Asian Indian American students identify when interacting with their parents?

3. What strategies do these students use to alleviate the mental stress, if any, from their communication with their parents about their academic performance and choices?

Chapter Two presented a review of the literature and Chapter Three detailed the methodology. This chapter reveals the results of the data analysis. First, I present the participant profiles and, thereafter, the emergent themes from the data analysis. It would be helpful for the reader to refer back to chapter one for definitions of some of the key terms used in this chapter for example “traditional,” “second generation,” and “model minority.”

Presentation of the Results

Since this is a phenomenological study, the data were analyzed for themes. A phenomenological study seeks to understand the lived experience of the participant and see how they perceived the events around them (Connelly, 2010). There are no absolutes in the phenomenology; there are only perceptions (Connelly, 2010; Willig, 2007). Through interviews, I attempted to capture the depth and breadth of the living experiences of the participants. The painting that was captured on the canvas after the data analysis was hardly homogenous or one- dimensional. The responses were varied – from complete serenity to unending conflict.

The themes that emerged from this study were then clustered into eight overarching themes described thusly: 1) Motivators in the academic journey from elementary school through college, 2) Perceptions of success could be different from students to parents, 3) Stereotyping from family, community, university is stressful; 4) the important role of tradition in the life of an Asian Indian American student, 5) Family honor and prestige is at the heart of it all, 6) Intergenerational issues related to life goals and academics, 7) The resultant stress and coping strategies, and lastly 8) The students' desires from family, community, and university. In the following sections, I will present the emergent themes from this study by including an analysis of the results and the voices of the students themselves. In figure 2 below, the reader can view a schematic of the themes uncovered during the process of data analysis.

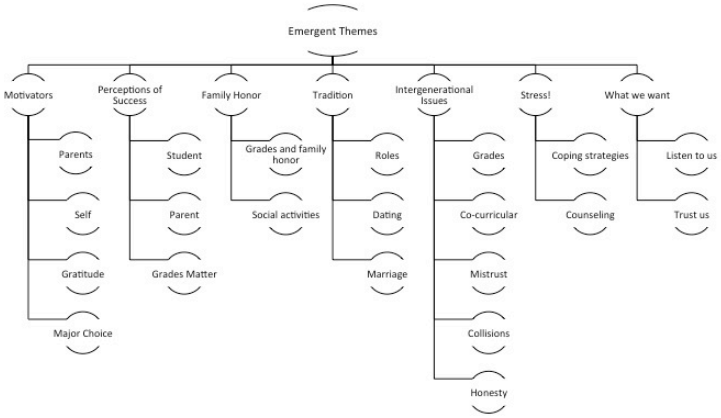

Figure 2: Emergent themes

THEME 1: MOTIVATORS IN THE ACADEMIC JOURNEY FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL THROUGH COLLEGE

The purpose of research question one was to understand how the students in this sample described their intergenerational communication regarding academics, including academic choices, current and past academic progress. Part of this communication process was the relaying of expectations and results between parent and child. We began the interview process with the exploration of the participants' academic journey from early school years through the present day. Upon analysis of the resulting data four subthemes emerged: 1) Students' perceived parent academic goals and expectations, 2) Students' own academic goals and self-expectations, 3) Gratitude towards parents, and 4) Student's perceived parent influence in major choice. These four subthemes were then collected into the major theme that described the motivators for the students.

Parent Academic Goals and Expectations For Participants

As literature suggests, Asian parents have high academic expectations of their children (see for example Baptiste, 2006; S. Lee et al., 2009; Tewari, 2002). The participants' perceptions of their parents' influence upon them validated the findings in prior literature. Because the students' narratives were not corroborated with their parents' narratives, I preface these findings by emphasizing that these are students' perceptions of their parents' approaches to academics. All students reported that their parents expected nothing short of academic excellence. The participants also discussed parts of the parents' immigrant journey, which, they felt, served to shape the academic aspirations of the parents for the child. The siblings' experiences became important in the case of a few participants as these made the data richer and added another dimension to the stories. Participants depicted their parents in the following ways: 1) as active and pro-active in their involvement in student academics and committed to the success of the students; 2) Judging their own parenting success through the success of their children; and 3) serving as tutors, teachers, and guides going so far as to re-teach the key concepts covered in certain classes. Participants noted that math and science were especially stressed as parents perceived better job security and financial payback in a career involving these fields. . Therefore, from the participants' vantage point, the parental involvement went beyond just assuring that the homework was complete. The underlying sub-theme in all the interviews was the tremendous stress on academics. Similar to Asian Indian American families cited in extant literature, academic excellence

was the foremost duty of the children in the house (see for example Chakrabarti, 2008; Das & Kemp, 1997).

Shaan informed me that academics was "always stressed" in his home and his parents would often "sit with my brother and I, and re-enforce concepts we learned in school and they would always encourage us, push us to make better grades, learn the material, and I think there was a real emphasis on learning." Despite being a busy entrepreneur, Shaan reported that his mother would also "read the chapter" with him if it was so needed. Comparing his parents to those of some of his friends in high school, Shaan felt that the expectations for academic excellence were "something unique" about his family. Speaking of his closest Asian Indian friends on campus, he noted, "with their parents and my parents I definitely noticed a difference. And even back home in SouthTown[2] where I come from. So my parents were always very, they always had a very high stress on, very high grades."

Shaan perceived that his parents expected perfect grades: "Grades were also very important and near perfect grades were [always] the expectation with my family." Shaan believed that in his parents' expectations, the only truly acceptable grade was an A. He recalled that a "subpar grade is an A- or a B." Although Shaan stated that high academic expectations of his family were unique in his city of Southtown, in the sample for the current study, the extremely high academic expectations from parents were the norm and were the accepted expectation.

[2] Note: The names of cities have been changed to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the participants

Academics and academic enrichment activities were also important in Gia's family. Gia recalled the routine of doing homework as soon as she and her brother came back from school. She stated that they "would always have to do our homework first before we did anything and then on top of our homework we were encouraged to do extra like practice problems and stuff so academics was always stressed." Gia specified that the rigorous academic routine created struggles between her and her parents in middle school but " in high school I kind of, I got started doing stuff on my own and they kind of sat back and let me go on, on my own." Chandrika also told a mixed, complex tale of immense gratitude to her parents, of unreasonably high expectations, of family honor versus the individual, and one of "pushing the stone." Like other participants, Chandrika stated that her parents had very high academic expectations of her and anything that detracted from academics was discouraged vigorously. Chandrika spoke of a duty to succeed, and of ultimatums and grades. From the demeanor and words of Chandrika, I detected a pressure that was far more intense than other participants. Perhaps this was because she felt that her parents were deeply subscribed to the idea of family honor and perceptions of other people:

> Dad [placed] a lot of stress on academics and anything that could possibly deter from that [was discouraged]. I wasn't allowed to date in high school for the fear of that it would distract from academics. And even with extra curricular activities, if my grade started falling [a low B]…then I would be placed under supervision…[I was told] well if you don't bring it up during your next test then you can't go to this coming debate tournament this weekend.

While Chandrika discussed consequences of failed expectations, Kira relayed that her parental expectations were always delivered in the kindest, gentlest manner possible and never as an ultimatum. While reflecting on her high school days, Kira remembered that even during academic struggles, her parents were very supportive.

> My parents have always wanted me to do well. But not to the point where they will [say] either I do well or I'm [not] a part of the family…it wasn't an ultimatum ever. I do remember I wasn't particularly strong in math throughout middle school. I got a lot better in high school.

Kira's struggles in math contrasted to her parents' professional success in engineering fields. Kira reported that her mother "completely understood" and was always supportive in teaching Kira and her younger sister. Although Kira sensed that her father felt some level of frustration, she relayed that the common response of her parents was: "[we] understand you did poorly in this, but what can we do to fix it." Hence, the strategy to succeed was based more on solution-based approaches rather than admonishment. Working through Kira's transcript, I attributed Kira's situation to the acculturation levels of her parents. They held on to the salient features of their own culture while assimilating into the host culture. Therefore, their interactions with Kira and a majority of their expectations of Kira were different from those of the other parents in the study.

Although Paarth himself performed well thus far, he shared the high degree of stress he felt from his parents as a result of his younger brother's poor academic performance. Paarth, himself, was curious about the trajectory of his brother's performance. After dropping to "100s range in his [Paarth's brother's] [class] rank,"

Paarth conveyed that it was "a major tension between my brother and my dad and basically in the family too." Paarth reflected that even after his parents' intervention, his brother did not improve much. He recognized that it was a great stress for his father and caused tension in the whole family. Like the aforementioned issues with Paarth's brother, Gia relayed some issues with her brother and described a term used by her father: "whitewashing." Gia went on to explain the term:

> My brother, he is more skeptical kind of almost disdainful about like going to temple or like some ritual practices and stuff and my dad and mom like encourages us to go and he just doesn't really show respect for that kind of thing and that has kind of caused my dad at least to make some comments…He just calls him 'whitewashed' and then that's it.

An interesting observation from the emergent themes was that among eight participants, two did not report any pressure from their parents to choose a certain major or career, or maintain a particular level of GPA. They felt self-motivated to achieve high grades for themselves but not due to any pressure. When I asked Gia to explain why her parents were different from those of my other participants, she speculated that it was because of the experiences of some other parents who had pressured their children in the community and now "[there was] no communication with their parents," or the children "just…left, where they got to the point where [the children] can't handle it anymore." Gia expressed that her parents seemed to embrace a philosophy that "you don't pressure your child. You let them do what they want like they can become really successful."

In this section, I detailed the themes that emerged related to the expectations that parents had of their children. In the next section, I will describe how these high

expectations became imbibed into the children as self-expectations as they progressed through their academic journey in college.

The Students' Own Academic Goals and Expectations

Self-motivation was an important sub-theme that emerged from the data. This theme suggested that the high expectations placed by the parents upon the child became immersed into the child's mind and, consequently, by the time they left home they were completely inculcated into the high achieving culture.

Each student in the current study sample was highly motivated and set a very high standard for himself/herself. This self-motivation appeared to be an extension of the parents' high standards early in life. All the participants recognized the importance of high grades. What would be judged as an excellent performance by the casual observer was sometimes not good enough for the student. Students carried forward these high achievement ideals for reasons of self-success, for fear of the parents' reactions, to uphold the family name, and out of a sense of obligation to the parents. Excellence, whether in academics or in co-curricular activities was paramount for the participants.

I start this discussion with Paarth, who exemplified how high goals led to high achievement. Very often, even high scores fell short of the standards of success he had defined for himself. Paarth shared his class standing in high school that he was "near the toppers, maybe 5%, never really the best but always pretty good." When Paarth returned from India to start middle school here, he was "basically the best in the class and then from then I think the kind of momentum carried and through high school I have been

pretty decent at things," but even so he constantly felt that "[he was] in the second class of students there is the best, there is people who are good and there is people who are not as good so that's how I felt." Paarth shared his standing in the top 5% of his class with pride but rued that "it wasn't [the] top 1% percent." He described his drive for success as a "a self-motivated drive…I compare myself to other people a little bit more [than others]." Sundar, who attended the same high school as Paarth, graduated with an International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma, which was "partially at the behest of my parents; and also partially a personal choice in order to further challenge myself."

The transition into college did not bring any change in the high expectations the students had of themselves. It appeared that the academic atmosphere created in the home became infused into the students as they transitioned into college. Shaan, speaking of his own self-imposed standards, conveyed:

> I want to be a straight A student…last semester I made my first B plus [B+] and that was a little hard…I worked really hard and I just didn't make the cut, but I feel, I want to work hard in college, because I feel it's going to give me tools that I am going to use whatever path that I go in.

Transitions can be smooth for some, but troublesome for others. Three of the eight participants reported that their college journey was challenging. While there were some stumbling blocks, the participants reported that they could draw lessons from their high school experiences and use the same strategies to get their performance back to the level where they were satisfied. Aishwarya "started off good" but then she went "a little bit of downhill sort of the thing." In a similar vein, Kira related that her academic path

through college has been one of "a steady improvement." She described her struggles and then her recovery:

> My first semester was not good. And then even my second semester wasn't particularly good. I took classes over the summer and I like got a foothold there and then from there I've been steadily getting better.

Sundar and his parents both set very high academic standards for him. Sundar expressed that, for his parents, it was not just important to excel for the sake of a career, but also for community and group approval. Therefore, the pressure was two-fold to succeed. Sundar described his transition to college, and the subsequent improvement:

> I would definitely say that it's taken a beating last semester and although the first two semesters were pretty good…[I was] proud with my accomplishment until that point. Last semester was not up to my own standards and definitely not up to my parents' standards. So this semester has been much, much improved…I hope to continue with this progress.

Two participants, Gia and Priyanka, had a 4.0 GPA and, like the others, were involved in co-curricular activities. The two participants reported no transitional issues and conveyed that they had a highly supportive parental and family relationship. In explaining the success of Asian Indian American students at the college level, the findings of self-motivation are important. It is evident that the students are immersed in the high-achieving culture in the home and, subsequently, carry the motivation through to college and beyond.

Gratitude for Parents

Participants shared that their own motivations came as a result of a large effort on the part of their parents early in the life of the students. All the participants recognized

this and each one expressed a level of gratitude for their parents' sacrifices and high demands. This sub-theme of gratitude was common through the interviews of all the participants. Later in the interviews, this was offset to some extent by some of the participants relaying the accompanying stress created by these same high expectations. All eight participants expressed indebtedness to their parents for their academic success. Chandrika captured this sentiment:

> By the time I graduated, I was in the top three percent [in a class of 1400]. And I am pretty sure I can attribute that to the fact that my parents were always…the support system. And I thank them for it.

Overall, the students appreciated the amount of time and effort the parents invested in their future to ensure a successful future. Shaan said he was lucky "to have parents that care so much about my future and about my upbringing that they want to give me what they think is the key to a good life." He went on to convey: "[I am thankful] for that, and I don't know if I would have worked as hard or been [at this university] if it weren't for them."

Whether the participants had any conflicts with their parents, they reported that they could turn to their parents when they struggled at college. They knew that they would always get the proper help and guidance. Aishwarya spoke of her parents' disappointment and subsequent strategies to remedy the struggle. She recalled that "there was more disappointment than anger and then [her parents said] how do we fix it?" Kira spoke of the nurturing environment in her house and the open atmosphere, which made it easy for her to reach out to her parents during her struggle with grades.

> They are definitely going to get angry at first…They will try to figure out what the problem was, I would be trying to figure out what the problem was, exactly where I went wrong, and at this point I wouldn't expect them to do anything else. I would be disappointed if their reaction was any different, that's exactly what they have been telling me since I was 7 years old…Even if you get a D or an F, we'll still help you out.

While Sundar relayed that his parents would be disappointed with any unexpectedly bad academic reports, they would still be more "forgiving and forthcoming from their side" as compared to some other students. Further, Sundar stated that even if there was a conflict about a bad grade there were "methods of resolving those conflicts."

Nevertheless, along with the gratitude there was a musing that perhaps the stress on academics alone was excessive. As a second generation that did not have to go through first generation immigrant struggles, these students felt that there was more to life than academics. Besides Gia, Priyanka, and Kira, the other participants relayed the feeling that constant high expectations were unreasonable. Shaan lamented "but I do feel sometimes it's a bit excessive." To illustrate the point that his achievements were never perfect, he elaborated: "It's like when I come home with a 98, [my father asks] who made the highest grade in the class." In a similar vein, Aishwarya asserted that there was more to life than just grades and she said her parents did not seem to understand that. She relayed that most of her conversation with her parents centered on grades and how she was doing in school. There was very little conversation outside of academics. When she spoke of anything other than academics, she lamented that her parents "don't ever pay attention to it or they don't ever really care. And it just kind of like ruins it honestly, it just makes it not fun any more." Likewise, Sundar explained: "I can say pretty

definitively that our [Asian Indian American students] grades are much less for ourselves and much more for our parents, at least in my perspective. And this has been a source of conflict in the past." These feelings were not evident across the entire sample as Kira, Gia, and Priyanka did not report any regrets or misgivings from the high expectations of the parents.

In summary, the students perceived that there were high academic expectations from the parents. As well, the students reported high expectations for themselves. The academic atmosphere that was created in the home was so infused into the students that the students carried it on as a habit in college. When the student went to college, students reported that parents stayed involved and the students recognized why the parents still cared in college. For a majority of the participants, the perception was that parents were influential both in choice of college and choice of major. There were various reasons why parents preferred and pushed one major over another. The next section provides an in-depth look into major choice and the influences behind the chosen major.

Choice of Major

Dundes, Cho, & Kwak (2009) documented that Asians generally chose prestige of the university and major over the child's happiness whereas white parents gave more importance to the happiness of the child. While prestige and honor were important in the current sample, participants emphasized that greater importance was placed on pragmatism and long-term earning potential in the choice of major. Participants felt that

parents drew upon their own struggles and experiences when they moved to the United States when they advised their children about their major and career.

The final choice of major was more complicated than just choosing a field of study for the sake prestige or family honor. Participants perceived that the roots of major choices were based on the immigrant experiences of their parents. The data indicated that the choice of major was related to financial stability, long-term security, and the parents' own struggles when they moved to the United States. If the parents did not clearly guide a student towards a particular major, they set the stage for certain areas of study right from elementary school, as Sundar explained: "My parents [guided] me… by suggesting or probably valuing math and science, and engineering class over liberal arts," which he conveyed "are traditionally not as highly approved of."

Gia, who was a STEM major with a 4.0 GPA, described a nurturing environment where she had the freedom to choose any major she wanted. Her parents did give her input about possible majors. Gia classified her parents as modern "in some aspects," and in others they were traditional. She relayed that her parents were more modern unlike typical Asian Indian American parents quoted in the literature (see for example Saran, 2007), particularly in their academic aspirations for their children like "becom[ing] a doctor, becom[ing] an engineer [and] academics is everything," Of other cultural expectations like "marriage, dating, that kind of stuff they are a little more traditional, [in] religion and cultural practices they are more traditional."

Gia spoke of her freedom to choose her major and how her parents' did give her advice but ultimately left it to her own discretion. Gia's experiences contrasted the general findings of the literature in this area which indicates that parents tend to have a major influence on choice of major.. Gia explained, "Coming into college - yes my parents did give their opinion [about what would be] a good major." Although Gia relayed that her parents did express a desire that Gia "go into finance and do business," they were satisfied and supportive with her current choice of major. Gia explained:

> I think in the end their only expectation is to be the best in whatever you do…I don't think they care about what that is as long as I enjoy it and [as long as] I am…doing my best or I am doing the best at it. So, no, I don't think I have found any pressure to choose my major.

Gia had a 4.0 GPA and planned to enroll in medical school after she completed graduate school. Thus, while she had the freedom to choose her major, she was still in a traditional Asian Indian career path. In a manner similar to Gia, Priyanka, who is a pre-med major with a 4.0 GPA, also reported no pressure to pick a major. She clarified that because her mother is a doctor she wanted to be a doctor since she was a child. When I speculated whether Priyanka's parents would be just as supportive with a major such as English Literature, she said:

> I don't think they would approve of [English literature]…They would ask me what I wanted to do with an English major…they [would] just be worried about what I would do after once I got the degree and what would I do with it.

The aforementioned response reflected that pragmatism was an important consideration for Asian Indian American parents in major choice for their children. Aishwarya, a STEM major, was in the midst of changing majors. Aishwarya's described

her parents' influence in choosing her major by indicating that "there was definitely some pressure, basically it was very quickly narrowed down to either engineering or something natural science. I wasn't really given [choice], I was basically told you are allowed to pick within these two. And so that first narrowing down of options was already done for me." Although Aishwarya struggled with her major after starting college, it took her two years to change her major. She explained this process of changing majors:

> I have been kind of on the fence about changing majors since [a semester ago] and then mom and dad didn't really agree until I completely just burned out. And then they [realized] maybe this is not the best thing for her so they definitely are more onboard with me now.

Something participants perceived that although parents did not choose a major for the child; they did dissuade the child from other majors. Shaan recounted that although he didn't feel "pressured to choose a major, but I felt pressured not to choose other majors," adding that it made his parents very nervous when he talked about "less conventional degree plans or professions." Following the common theme uncovered in other participants, Shaan explained his parents' insistence that he and his brother stay away from certain majors was based on their own struggles when they immigrated to the United States. Shaan elaborated on this further:

> Both of my parents struggled a lot to get to this country. They moved in here after their marriage, after they both had jobs in the east [on] the other side of the world, and they always felt like they were behind everyone, ten years behind everyone their age. Just because they started late and there was a struggle. And so they worked really, really hard to get where we are now. And both my brother and I have a lot of respect for that. But I think what that's really contributed to is, they want both my brother and I to choose, majors, career paths that will get us secured jobs that pay X amount of money, so we can just have stability and raise families and then we can follow our passions. That's their perspective.

Similar to Shaan, Chandrika expounded on the challenges her father faced after he had to re-educate himself upon moving to the United States. Those struggles, she stated, were the catalyst for steering her away from the majors that she was most passionate about – Journalism and Writing. She perceived their reasoning thusly:

> People in America jump from job to job a lot, but my dad has done that before [as] he went from Mechanical Engineering to Computer Science. [Although] he is still enjoys his major, but at the same time he regrets it because it slowed him down like in terms of career path…He doesn't want to see that happening to me… It's a constant my parents want what would be perfect for what I want. Given the parameters that I communicate to them they want to make sure that they are leading me towards the best life possible.

Chandrika's perceived that, to her parents, long-term prospects and prosperity were paramount. She recounted how they reiterated this point to her when she expressed a desire to pursue Journalism as a major: "he just told me that if you go down this path - do you know how long it takes for a journalist to make it in the journalism world?"

In summary, participants indicated that their parents were very involved in the major choice of their children. Whether that involvement came through a firm mandate given to the student as happened with Aishwarya, or an inculcation of math and sciences as happened with Sundar, or a dissuasion of certain majors as happened with Shaan and Chandrika, this involvement was deep. The main reasons for guiding students towards certain majors seemed to be based in the parents' own struggles to thrive and achieve the American dream once they left their homeland to come to these shores. In the final analysis the participants perceived that the child'ssuccess was very important for the parents. What mattered to the student was their own success for their own sake as well

for their parents' sake. In the next section I will reveal what this "success" meant to the students and their perceptions of their parents' view of success and the disparity (if any) between the two.

THEME 2: PARTICIPANT PERCEPTIONS OF SUCCESS

Parents wanted to see their children in successful, stable, high paying jobs, which not only upheld the family name but also reified the parents' efforts for the child. The parents had a single focus: success for the students. To that end, it was important in the context of the study to understand what success meant to these students and what the students perceived success to mean to their parents. During the course of the interviews, the participants discussed their own perceptions of success and what they perceived success meant to their parents. In the sections below the sub-themes uncovered in this major theme are presented: 1) Students' perception of success and 2) Professional success and its relationship to academic success

Students' Perceptions of Success

Participants perceived that their views and those of their parents seemed to align regarding the definition of academic excellence, however, more information was needed to ascertain if their perceived views on the meaning of success were also aligned. The analysis revealed that there were disparities between the views of students and the perceived views of parents. While success, to Aishwarya, meant finding balance in her life with lesser regard to financial affluence, Aishwarya felt that her parents' view of

success was based on good grades, financial stability, and job security. Aishwarya articulated her own view of success as "finding the balance," stating that in an ideal situation "you should be happy." She questioned the material interpretations of success because "what is going to get you [to the balance], is it having that job, having that house…Success to me is going to be…if you can look down the road or just look back and not have any regrets and to enjoy where you are." Aishwarya based some of her beliefs on what she had observed in her mother when her mother complained about going to work in the morning as well as her idealism to "make a difference." She explained that, unlike her mother, she did not wish to force herself to like her work or force herself to go to work every day. She clarified:

> I don't ever want to wake up [and say]…oh I have to go to work. I want to enjoy what I do, because mom's always [complaining] I don't want to work anymore and dad will grumble about it…For me to truly enjoy what I am doing and it has to be something…where I am contributing towards something useful or I don't want a job just doing anything. I want to actually like me making a difference in someway.

Aishwarya contrasted her view of success with her parents and attributed the difference to their upbringing, background, and their experiences as immigrants.

> Dad [says] grades are the most important thing and that's what's going to define everything, but I always tell them…not really everything…For his mentality, for the way that he was raised from and from what he grew up with to where he is now success is purely, its numbers and I understand why he thinks that way based on his life experiences…[He says] You should be a doctor, you will make so much money…[The] ultimate measure by which success is measured is financial stability and job security.

In the same tone as Aishwarya, Kira mused that she would like a well-rounded life rather than a life based on career alone. She relayed a more short-term perception of

her parents' view of success. "They expect high grades…As, A(-)s are their limit." For Kira herself, she said she "would like to have a career that is fulfilling…close family and friends around me, a good support system…freedom in terms of choosing exactly what I want to do. Whether that be traveling, volunteering, I wouldn't want my life to just be career. I'd like to have something outside of that."

To Chandrika, success was related to a certain lifestyle. Since she belonged to an upper middle class family, she saw a successful life as one that allowed her to maintain her current lifestyle. Further, success was a multi-faceted and not a one-dimensional notion, as she explains:

> Success is definitely a mixture of lot of things, if you are comfortable with the way you were brought up as a kid being able to provide that same lifestyle for yourself on your own, I feel is also a measure of success. I mean I come from a mid to upper middleclass socioeconomic level and I would like to either sustain or increase that level when I am fending for myself and not being financed by my parents. And so whatever success I am able to achieve within my job if it can support that lifestyle, I mean that's what I would consider as success and then also happiness as well, [I want to be] happy.

For Chandrika's parents the definition of success took on another dimension. Chandrika perceived that, to her parents, success was in large part a measure of how other people thought of her. As will be evidenced further in this chapter, family honor and community perception are very important in the Asian Indian American population. Chandrika disagreed with this definition of success and further speculated that perhaps her parents looked for societal validation since she was an only child. Chandrika relayed that her parents "always refer back to what other people think what will other people think." Chandrika's parents judged her as successful if she was "given as an example as

one of the best people in whatever profession [she's pursuing]. I think that for them matters a lot - other people again other people's perception of [my success]."

Chandrika did not subscribe to her parents' definition of success as she believed that a desire to live by other people's approval could be "taken to an extreme," adding further that she didn't "care about what other people think of me as long as I am happy and my parents are happy." Although her parents also wanted to see her happy, for them it was "it is about the society and what they think."

Gia and Priyanka had similar altruistic views of success, which involved not just realizing professional success but also making a social difference in the process. For Priyanka, success meant going to medical school and "try[ing] different ways to help people not just being a doctor…caring for people." For Gia, success meant, "being able to go to med school and combine my interest in public health in doing something meaningful." Further, she wanted to have the means to comfortably look after her family and have the means and time to have a social life. She explained:

> Socially…having a good social life, family life…That would be success… I think money ties into the extent where I want to be comfortable, where I want to be able to live comfortably, take care of my family, my parents and not have money be an issue or stress.

Conversely, Gia felt that her parents defined success very differently where they thought that if she married rich she would be successful. She described her parents' views:

> They don't want me to work as much [as them]. The other day it was really funny, my mom [said] the next guy that you date make sure he is premed so you don't have to be a doctor and you can just stay at home, I [asked] what if I want to

> become a doctor. She was like oh then you should just work part time so I think their idea of success would be [that] I marry rich or I just get to sit at home all day and not work.

Although Gia's views and her perception of her parents' views of success were on two extremes of the success continuum, she did not report any conflict from these dichotomous views.

Describing a more "narcissistic" view of success, Paarth stated that success, to him, "would just be doing interesting things, having the most interesting experiences and being free and to be free you need lot of things, you need things like money." Paarth had an interest in working on "cool products" and he wanted to travel abroad. Making a connection between monetary success and happiness, Paarth stated that in his version of success "money is a factor in that utility, but it's not the only factor…I feel like because whatever I do, whatever else I do, I am going to make like a bit more money but maybe but it's not going to give me as much as satisfaction probably."

Both Paarth and Shaan described most Asian Indian parents as being "risk-averse." For Shaan, success in life meant "finding what you feel you need to do with your life, what you are passionate about, what you care about, and following that and putting your heart and soul in it and you know, trying to be as successful as you can," and there was no standard definition to categorize success as "success in life is different for each person." Shaan knew that "there is a difference between what I view as success and what my parents view as success…our versions of success are really different." While Shaan felt very strongly that without a certain level of risk there would be no real

success, he felt that his parents were wary of risk-taking partly due their own struggles as new immigrants to the United States.

Sundar's view of success was not monetary; rather his definition of success was "very simple" since all he wanted was "happiness and satisfaction." He elaborated: "even if I find enjoyment in just becoming, I don't know an artisan making cheap pieces of wood carvings…if I find happiness in that, then I would say yeah, that's a successful life for myself." On the other hand, Sundar relayed that his parents viewed success in three dimensions: financial stability, a good spouse, and community perception or family prestige. Sundar explained this difference:

> Success to them is finding a suitable spouse…having a stable well paying [job] …they would definitely consider it less to the success if that job were not is well paying or if it were not as professionally recognized if it was not as honorable…but their emphasis has always largely been as far as success goes, financial stability and how others would perceive my status at that job.

All of the participants perceived that their parents viewed success as financial stability, and high professional achievement. Further, the participants observed that most parents were averse to risk-taking at a young age. These beliefs, from the participants' vantage points, were shaped, to a large extent, by their parents' own early struggles when they came into the United States. The data indicated that the participants felt strongly that their parents believed that success in life is intricately tied to academic success. Since the students' and parents' views on success were different, it was important to understand if academic success was inherently connected to professional success.

Professional success and its relationship to academic success

The sample for this study was a group of self-motivated participants enrolled at one of the premier tier-one research universities in the United States. Each participant reported an excellent academic standing with the university and they had repeatedly spoken of their desire to perform well, be it for their own sake or for that of their parents. As the interviews moved to the topic of whether students believed that professional success was tied to their academic performance, most participants believed that ultimate success was intricately tied to success in college with the exception of Priyanka who shared that she had "heard [of] plenty of people have not graduated college, but have the success and that success…could be like having good family and just being happy." Paarth was certain that success in academics gave an individual more choices. In his opinion, college success was "tied into a specific version of success because if you are a top student do you really go into a top college, if you are a top student in that college then you have more opportunities, right?" He had a more philosophical view of college success in that it gave him the freedom to choose his own life and resulted in "the world not being, not imposing itself on you but you are having a choice to pick [what I want to do] instead of just letting things happen to you and that's really the biggest reason…whether people know it or not - that's why [people] choose to pursue education."

Sundar was firm in his belief that success in academics was tied to success in life because "a good academic upbringing and challenging yourself in order to succeed

academically is definitely going to lead to further success in that field. And if that's what you're interested in that's your passion then yes, academic success is a requisite."

In summary, the participants listed several checks which would indicate that they have lived a successful life such as life-balance in the case of Aishwarya; a desire to do some public good along with a noble profession as in case of Gia and Priyanka; and as the others stated fulfillment, doing what they were passionate about, and possibly making money along the way. At times, this came into direct conflict with what they perceived to be their parents wishes for their children, including a well-paying job, a stable career, and some of this was centered in family honor and prestige. Asian Indian Americans have achieved great successes both due to parental motivation and due to the self-motivation of students. This visible success has resulted in stereotyping and it is this visible success that threw a cloak of invisibility on the struggles within. As was mentioned in chapters one and two, this population has been stereotyped to be successful, to be good in areas such as Math and Science. In the next section, I will examine the participants' views about model minority casting.

THEME 3: STEREOTYPING FROM FAMILY, COMMUNITY, UNIVERSITY ARE STRESSORS

Literature indicates that a stereotype exists that casts Asian Indian Americans as high-achievers and highly successful individuals (S. S. Lee, 2010; Saran, 2007; Vaidhyanathan, 2000). Further, there is an assumption that Asian Indian Americans are naturally good in subjects such as Math and Science. Not only is the model minority

stereotype propagated in the non-Asian Indian community, is even stronger within the community. Since Asian Indian Americans are a collectivist ethnic group (Khurana, 2008), this stereotype influences decisions on majors, academics, professional choices, and even marriage choices. Since this stereotype is so intricately tied to this population and into family honor for Asian Indian Americans, I explored how the participants responded to being labeled from outside and inside the core group.

Surprisingly, half the students had not heard the phrase "model-minority"; nonetheless they reported that they had faced stereotyping from within their own communities and outside, in the university communities. Of the eight students in the study, two were supportive of the model minority stereotype whereas six denounced the myth.

Besides Kira and Paarth, all participants felt that there was a level of unfairness to the model minority label as it generated unrealistic expectations, both from within the community and outside the community. Chandrika and Aishwarya denounced the "grade-grubbing mentality" among many members of the Asian Indian American community, which they believed was directly in response to the pressure to perform at a certain level. Although Aishwarya's parents "applied pressures," she stayed away from joining the stereotypical actions of many Asian Indian American students at her high school like "recalculating [the GPA] after each test." To Aishwarya grades were important but she stated that "it's more important to learn…than it is to make a hundred…You can make an A without actually learning anything."

Chandrika, who lived in a primarily Asian Indian neighborhood, spoke passionately about the "GPA whores" in the nationally ranked, highly competitive high school that she attended. She voiced stories of students who would fight for every single point on assignments and tests in order to get a higher class rank. Although Chandrika herself was eager to do well (ranked 40 out of a class of 1400), she did not believe in "the whole selling yourself out for the sake of doing what you want to do or going where you want to go, I feel misrepresenting yourself will only cause problems in the future because then you are again expected to perform at that level that you have misrepresented yourself at and then things start getting bad and you start slipping fast and then there is no recovery."

Gia admitted that there was a prevailing belief that "[Indians] are all premed…so whenever you meet someone non-Indian and you tell them you are not premed and you introduce yourself as such and it's like oh well a Indian [non] premed person." Although Gia had not experienced typecasting directly, she felt it was unfair. She said, "That's a really high expectation to live up to…I won't be thrilled about it. Of course I would work hard whatever it was but just because to say that oh she is Indian, she has been doing great…it's too much pressure."

Priyanka did not feel stereotyped on campus but she recalled that there was a stereotype in high school that "Indian students are supposed to – we're supposed to get like on average [SAT score] like 1900, but like everyone else is like their average are usually 1600 or something like that." She also felt that the stereotyping was unjustified,

whether in high school or on campus. She elaborated: "I think students shouldn't be pressured by the stereotype. I feel I do my thing it's just like this is me, this is what I wanted to do, this is how I'm going to do it…I have people coming to me and talking about like how Indians have to score high on the … I'm going to do as good as I can and I try not to listen to everyone else."

While Shaan did not recall being the direct target of stereotyping, he agreed Asian Indian Americans are unfairly regarded as a model minority based on his brother's experiences. In his direct experience, he conveyed that most people assume that Asian Indian American students were "usually premed or engineering." Shaan relayed his brother's experience:

> I remember him talking about how he was, he is very involved in UIL academics and debate and so how he went just expectations that oh you are you know Asian American, you are Indian you know you are supposed to be smart, you are supposed to like you know study just, stereotypes like that that just he felt kind of little evolved between him and the person he was interacting with. He actually did, he did his original oratory over this topic.

Contrary to the other participants, Kira felt that being called a model-minority was an advantage as it "gave her a leg up." She considered it an honor, an accolade. She felt she was a step ahead of others in the workplace and in the classroom with the label applied to her. She looked at it "from the perspective of almost having a leg up…if I go out for a job interview or something, my ethnicity already says that I am going to be doing well. That's an awesome advantage to have." Similarly Paarth also thought the model minority label had a positive connotation. He explained that although he was "not big on things like feeling honor or anything but I feel like it's kinda nice, in the same way

that it's nice to be regarded as someone with money, it's kind of nice." Paarth, like Kira, did not take issue with excessively high expectations from being a member of the model minority. He believed that "if that gets us leg up sure, I don't really felt that being pressured on expectations in anyway I felt like my expectations were always very high so I don't think that's a really ever been a problem."

Of all the participants, Sundar and Chandrika gave perhaps the most impassioned, account of being stereotyped as model minority. Sundar revealed his opinions about the model minority myth in the following dialog about being the target of stereotyping:

> Sundar: Yes and heavily enforced from both sides.
> AK: From both sides? Describe [what you mean by] both sides.
> Sundar: Both sides being those within the "Model Minority" and those who have from outside you have got all other groups who form either majority or other I guess "underrepresented minorities" and they look to us as the examples…I feel the term is both prescriptive and descriptive…in that when people describe me as the "Model Minority" it's not only an unsaid or unvoiced expectation that I am supposed to perform better, it's said, it's very explicitly said, oh but you are Indian of course you have gotten A on this test. Or oh but you are Indian of course you are an engineer or a doctor or related profession. And in that sense I am definitely against the use of that term, I mean it's very valid, very applicable, very useful term and it's required in order to discuss this issue, but hearing myself described as part of "Model Minority" it always creates this feeling of uneasiness in myself, because it feels like it's an unfair expectation, it's not that I am supposed to do better than other people because of my ethnicity or because of my background, but on the other hand it is very useful as a descriptor and I can definitely see why it is so prevalent and used today, because every time we talk about the "Model Minority" in this fashion, we are describing something that's very real and very clear and very easily backed up by statistical methods…it's a useful descriptor, I don't like it being applied to myself but I definitely see why it is.

Aishwarya cautioned against labeling a population in a certain manner as "every race, every culture, every group has it's own stereotype and there are people who fit in

and there are people who don't, but at the same time putting that label on there doesn't make it true." Chandrika also conveyed the pitfalls of being labeled a model minority. She spoke of the stress it caused for her and possibly for other Asian Indian American students. The kind of stress she described could have far-reaching repercussions for the student's physical, mental, and emotional health as well as towards their academic progress. She described her dilemma.:

> So at some instances, I feel embarrassed to ask for help for Math and Science because people perceive me as already knowing it, so I feel like if I ask for help then they will think I am stupid, but I don't do that anymore, but I definitely did that in high school and summer freshman year because when you are in your top programs and you are Indian or you are Asian then asking for help is kind of like oh wait, do I really belong here? That's the kind of the emotion that you feel."

In addition, Chandrika indicated that the stress of the model minority was label was hardly one-dimensional; rather it was all encompassing and multi-dimensional. She said it was extremely stressful because "I am expected to perform not only what my parents want me to do and what I want to do myself and not only what my [own] community expects me to do, but what people outside of my Indian community expect me to do." Unlike Kira and Paarth, Chandrika did not feel like being labeled a model minority was an honor. Rather she said it was "quite the reverse." She cautioned against becoming complacent about the label and embracing the label because:

> It gives you kind of a disadvantage because you are put on another level that you may not already be at…you maybe up the same level as the white kid applying or the Latino kid applying and if you [are] already put at that level before they have even had a chance like assess you as like an individual person, independent of color and race and ethnic standing…if you already expect it to perform at a higher level than the other people applying and you don't need it, it's not fair…I feel like society should definitely know that they should stop trying to put people in certain

> categories…look at American kids, there are so many different levels of intelligence and you can say that oh, well Jewish people tend to be smarter, it's like no, maybe that Jewish kid hung out with an impoverished neighborhood in New York or something and he didn't have the prep school education or anything then you are going to judge him against all of the other Jewish kids that went to prep school and that's not fair.

The participants stated that most Asian Indian American students face similar experiences when on campus and thus they form, as Aishwarya called it, "informal support groups." Asian Indian American students understood the pressures other Asian Indian American students felt. Therefore there was a tendency to commiserate. Gia said, "I am realizing now that I fit in a lot better with the Indian community on campus, the South Asian community than I do with the non-Indians and so I am trying to figure out why that…maybe like they are in similar situations or…have similar backgrounds."

Kira, however, stated that she didn't "particularly identify with the Indian crowd on campus." She bemoaned the lack of Asian Indian American students who were balanced. She explained that "out of 10 Indian girls, they will be half that will only care about grades [and nothing else]…the other half are those that go out and party every night of the week…somewhere in the middle maybe you will find one or two that are like me, where I mean, I'm in the middle." Kira tried to involve herself with Asian Indian American student organizations but she found that she did not fit in with the Asian Indian American student crowd. The other participants were involved in various levels at several Asian Indian American cultural organizations and "hanging out" with other Asian Indian American students.

In summary, the students felt varied amounts of stress from being labeled as high-achievers and being successful. Due to this classification and in order to live up to this labeling, the students perceived that their parents had high academic expectations of them. Besides the parents, there were also high expectations from within and outside the community. Six of the eight respondents believed that such a labeling was unfair, unjust, and exerted too much pressure on the student.

Part of the pressure to live up to the model minority stereotype was rooted in the traditional family units of the participants. It was evident from the discussions with students that tradition played an important role in their home and campus lives. Part of the role of the tradition was to keep the students rooted in their ethnic values without getting influenced by the dominant culture outside or as Gia described it "whitewashed." The students perceived that their parents felt tradition was one way they could guide their children towards what the parents perceived as success. In the next section, I will elaborate on the role that traditions played in the life of Asian Indian American students in the current study as well as how the practice of such traditions impacted intergenerational relationships.

THEME 4: PERCEPTIONS OF HOME, PARENTING AND TRADITIONS

Besides academics, participants relayed that culture and tradition were emphasized in their respective homes. Participation in cultural activities, such as: language, dance, and music was not just encouraged, rather it was expected. While the female students attended music and dance classes, the cultural immersion for the male

students was more passive, in the form of watching Bollywood movies and dialog with parents. As well, there was an emphasis on traditional expectations such as respect for elders, reverence for religion, unquestioning obedience of parents, and deference for the family. For at least one participant, the perception was that her parents felt that cultural immersion could be truly accomplished by moving the children out of the dominant host culture to the native guest culture. Priyanka, who experienced such a transition, explained: "My dad wanted us to go back to India, learn the culture there, the traditions there because we didn't grow up with much of them here…[my dad wanted us to] learn the mother tongue which is Telugu and be more familiar with it." While an extreme move, such as one described above, was initially difficult for Priyanka, she reflected that it was actually "best thing that could have happened…I don't regret moving to India at all." Paarth also moved to India in elementary school although the reasons for moving were not so clear. He suggested "one reason for me going back to India was academic," adding "but that's not the whole story. Perhaps my parents felt it would be better for my dad to get more established in the U.S. first."

Traditions play an important role in Indian culture and, in many cases, traditions drive the day-to-day decisions that parents make about their children (Salam, 2010; Sharma, 2008). In order to understand how the students communicated with their parents, and in order to explore barriers to intergenerational communications, it was imperative to acknowledge and appreciate the role that traditions played in the students' upbringing and daily lives. During the course of the interviews, the students elaborated

on the roles their parents played in their academic and cultural journey. They also explained how traditions sometimes created issues in intergenerational communications. While exploring the data, there were two sub-themes that converged to form this major theme. These themes are: 1) Parental roles as perceived by students, and 2) Traditional views on dating, marriage, and pre-marital sex.

Student perceptions of parental roles

Literature suggests that, in Asian Indian culture, parental roles are gender based with mothers being the vessel through which cultural information is transmitted to the offspring and fathers fulfilling the role of academic guide (see for example Balan, 2009; Dasgupta, 1998). The data gleaned from this study affirmed what the literature stated. Although both parents were involved in the students' academic progress and transmission of cultural values, there was, in most cases, a shift in the balance towards one parent or the other. Table 2 provides an overview of parental involvement, as perceived by the participants, in academic and cultural learning. Of the eight participants, four believed that their mothers passed on the cultural values; one stated that the father was the main cultural conduit, and three participants identified both mother and father as the entities that passed the cultural baton.

Table 2 illustrates the perceived parental roles in the academic and cultural lives of the study participants:

Table 2

Participant Perception of Parental Roles

Participant	Academic Guidance	Cultural Transmission
Aishwarya	Father	Mother
Paarth	Father	Mother
Chandrika	Father	Mother
Sundar	Mother and father	Mother
Priyanka	Mother	Father
Gia	Father	Mother and father
Kira	Mother and father	Mother and father
Shaan	Mother and father	Mother and father

Aishwarya spoke about the clearly divided roles in her home, where her mother took on the task of passing down cultural values and her father was "very actively involved with the classes I take, the grade that I make, the assignments that I have to do or at least he was for most of high school." Similarly, Paarth explained that it was his father who was the parent who played the larger role in academics while his mother passed the family and cultural values. Sundar's mother was "more culturally inclined" while his father was the disciplinarian as he was "more likely to suggest (or alternatively, enforce) certain cultural values." In academics, Sundar's parents provided him with guidance whenever he requested it and he "[was] to approach both parents together if any concerns arise. That goes for all interactions, in fact." For Gia, her "dad definitely helps [her] more with academics, but they both pass on cultural values, fairly equally."

As part of the cultural transmission, parents enforced upon, and educated the students about, traditional Indian values about dating and marriage. Prior research confirms that Asian Indian parents insist on traditional Indian values of celibacy before

marriage and putting of dating until marriage as these interfered with academic and professional goals (Inman et al., 2007).

Traditional views on dating, marriage, and pre-marital sex

The students described their traditional family values on the significant traditional life events, such as a dating, marriage, and pre-marital sex. Participants noted divergent views between parents and children about the aforementioned activities. The participants' perceptions suggested that their parents discouraged pursuits that were socially accepted in the western culture. The discouragement was based in tradition and for fear that such activities interfered with academics. There was also the element of family honor where parents feared that dating and interracial marriage could give the family a bad name. Although both parents were involved, for most of the participants it was mothers who shared the greater responsibility of passing down traditional values.

Kira's reported that her parents, through acculturation, seemed to have found a perfect balance between traditional Indian and Western cultures. Thus, Kira divulged that she that did not feel constrained by traditional values and lifestyles in her household. While Kira did not discuss subjects such as dating and marriage with her father, she was fairly open with her mother. When asked about the role of tradition in everyday living, Kira said that she and her parents had made adjustments to lead a "harmonious, hassle-free life." Although there were a few customs that Kira's mother was "attached to," Kira reported that her parents were "very open…it will take them a little bit of adjustment, but they will definitely consider what I am saying and try to see from my perspective, and at

least try to come to some sort of a middle ground." At the time of the interview, although Kira was involved in a relationship that her parents were aware of, she was unsure how they would react to interracial marriage and interracial dating. Her father, being more traditional of both the parents Kira mused, "with interracial stuff…I will approach these subjects with my mom and she'll let talk to them with my dad, but I don't discuss them directly with him, because his answer is usually no, for all of these things. Although Kira reported that she felt no pressure or constraint from traditional Indian values, her responses suggested otherwise. Her hesitation to speak with her father about sensitive issues suggested a subtle pressure existed to conform to traditional Indian values.

Paarth revealed that his communication with his parents was strained as he felt he was unable to open up to them due to his perceptions of their traditional inhibitions. Paarth conveyed that his parents "never ever discuss sex in anyway… there is definitely lines on…these issues," because his parents were not the "liberal tell-all like let's talk about everything type parents at all." Regarding dating, Paarth's conveyed "they definitely don't want me to date, it doesn't come up, we didn't talk about it, we didn't talk about it at all but I have done it like last spring I had a girlfriend for the entire semester, they didn't know, I didn't tell them." Following a traditional Asian Indian scenario, Paarth relayed that his parents stressed to him that he would "have to marry the Telugu girl of the same caste" that they find for him. They were opposed to interracial marriage due to their rigid cultural beliefs and "the culture needs to kind of stay."

Priyanka went to India for high school so that she would be immersed in traditional India. Priyanka conveyed that father was the main vessel to pass down cultural values whereas her mother was more involved in her academics. Priyanka's father was the one who infused traditional cultural values in the children. Her parents' opinions were divided on issues such as dating. Priyanka conveyed that she was "not allowed to [date]…my mom is more open to it, but my dad…is very traditional… I've never talked to him about it actually …my mom she is more open towards it because she knows that I'm in college…I have my own life and it could happen." While Priyanka related that her mother did not "say no" to dating, it was her perception that her mother would not "encourage it." For Priyanka herself, academic excellence was of paramount importance. Due to that commitment to academics, Priyanka did not "have time" to get into the arena of dating. Being very respectful of her parents' traditional roots and beliefs, she molded her values to the beliefs of her parents. Regarding the presence of tradition in everyday life, Priyanka believed her parents had found a balance for preserving the traditions from their native land while making a new life in a modern land.

Sundar believed that dating and choosing his own life-mate were not clear options for him, as he reported that his parents were very conservative. Sundar perceived that his parents, like other traditional Asian Indian parents, followed the traditional path on dating, marriage, and pre-marital sex. Sundar explained his relationship with his parents on the subject of dating thusly:

> I suppose they take the conservative stance on [dating] in that it should not happen or it should not be an issue until marriage. They have relented, in a

> fashion that's reflected in a lot of my friend's parents as well, in that they permit dating but they want to emphasize that this is not at all serious and that any relationship that you have with a person of the opposite gender…It's not supposed to be serious. And they still believe that they will be the ones to find the person that I am going to marry. So they have at least some sort of input as far as arranged marriages go, but at the same time they also recognize that I may have my own personal choice or desire and that they are willing to respect that as well.

Sundar perceived that, for his parents, honor was at the heart of their traditional views on normally accepted American teenage activity such as pre-marital sex. Sundar qualified the issue of pre-marital sex as one of "public relations" because he felt that his parents did not want "other people thinking bad things about the family and so not only would [pre-marital sex] be immoral, it will also be a indecent for them." In a manner akin to Sundar, Chandrika stressed the resistance to dating from her parents. This conflict, she informed me, was tied to family honor on one hand and academic progress on the other. At the time of the first interview, Chandrika was in a relationship with a man who was a few years her senior. However, her parents were unaware of the relationship at that point. Later, when Chandrika informed her parents about the relationship, she relayed that they reacted thusly: "It's either the 'American way' or the 'Indian way'. You are no longer our daughter," leaving Chandrika feeling "so broken." Chandrika, herself, had a "whimsical and romantic view of life," which, she revealed, had been fostered in the shadow of the traditions. With regards to pre-marital sex, she stated, "I say it in a rush…because I take a very romantic view on relationships and I feel like certain thing should be saved for marriage because I feel that's a really big step and if things don't work out then you have to live with that for the rest of your life." While

Chandrika was thinking in the duality of romance and pragmatism; she perceived that her parents' view on dating came from "a more traditional view that you shouldn't do it…it's not good, it's not proper." Despite her differences with her parents, Chandrika reported that she had the utmost respect for her parents and appreciation of her Indian roots. She was dismissive of doing anything that would cause emotional pain or hurt to her parents.

Aishwarya reported conflict with her parents on cultural values about marriage, dating, and the expectation that she would obey parental authority based on the generational seniority of her parents. Aishwarya struggled with the Indian notion about obeying parents just because of their age. Of her parents, she valued "what [they] have to say to [her]," adding "there is a very strong connection between respect and agreement whereas I can appreciate [my parents'] opinion and respect it but not feel the same way." That, she lamented, was "something that my parents don't always understand." Aishwarya had an unspoken agreement with her parents about marriage: "[My sister and I] are allowed to look but [my parents] are also going to look."

Compared to Chandrika, Sundar, and Aishwarya, Shaan described his relationship with his parents as being more open. The communication between him and his parents was very well rounded. In terms of dating, Shaan perceived that his parents were not opposed to it, but as for pre-marital sex, "they made it clear to me that's not what they support or believe in."

Gia reported that her parents discouraged interracial marriage and they had informed her "on several occasions" that "interracial marriages are not okay." After

attending the interracial marriage of the daughter of a family friend, Gia reported that her parents commented that "it was sad" and that they could "see the pain in his father's eyes, he was so ashamed…you could tell [the girl's father] was embarrassed about it." It is important to note that these were verbatim words that Gia recalled, not necessarily the actual words of her parents. In analyzing the students' narratives, they oftentimes quoted their parents, which do not necessarily ensure accuracy.

An interesting finding was that in the midst of intergenerational conflict, the participants were very cognizant of their parents' feelings and paid due respect to the origin point of their parents' feelings on dating, marriage and pre-marital sex. Cultural values were passed down not just through direct conversation and behavior modeling; they were also passed though indirect means such as Bollywood movies.

Some participants spoke of finding a balance between the very traditional Indian cultural practices in their homes and the very modern Western climate outside the home. Shaan related how his parents passed down their religious values by serving as an example. In Shaan's case he relayed that his father "is a little religious, so is my mom [but] neither of them would force religion on us…My dad would pray twice a day and he taught me just how to do that." Paarth and his brother were respectful of their mother's feelings as they negotiated their own attitudes towards religion. Paarth divulged that both he and his brother "aren't very open about our views because we are fairly certain that out mom wouldn't take kindly to our views on [religion]…[We] don't want to hurt our mom because like I said she is very religious." The cultural conflict, Paarth asserted, was

natural and anticipated because "[my parents] by bringing us here, they have made the choice to raise us in western culture."

Shaan and Sundar both talked about their parents trying to be balanced about Indian traditions and Western acculturation. Shaan's parents held on to many traditional values but also accepted some activities such as "meeting up with friends…school dances…coming home late," and he added, "in those senses they are very modern." Certain things were still off-limits such as "traditional dating…which at least in U.S. or western culture that's a norm." Similarly, Sundar described his parents' struggle to find some semblance of a balance between traditional Indian and modern Western values. Sundar reported that his parents' traditional preferences were shaped by their traditional upbringing. He explained that:

> There is definitely a middle ground here. From the beginning, they were definitely more of the traditional side. Both of my parents were grown up and raised in a predominantly Indian community in [another country]. And they were married by their parents [in] an arranged marriage. Once they moved here they still maintained many traditional aspects of Indian culture, both religious and cultural. However, that has begun to change a little bit, although they still maintain connections with the religious organization here in SouthTown.

In summary, the study participants were steeped in tradition and cultural values. For all of the participants, following tradition was not a matter of choice; rather it was a mandate from the parents. Using their own behaviors as an example, participants reported that their parents modeled tradition to their children and that parents valued and expected morality, integrity, decorum, academic excellence, and reverence. Participants assumed that many of these expectations came from the desire to lift and uphold the

family name. While this study did not focus on gender differences during the interviews, an interesting gender difference emerged in the results. Of the eight participants in this study, five were women. It appeared, from the limited data collected on cultural transmission, that the parents expected the female participants to be more immersed in cultural pursuits, such as classical Indian singing and traditional Indian dancing, than the male participants. The female participants were involved in Indian dancing, singing, and other such deeply cultural pursuits. Part of the emphasis on culture was to pass on values to the next generation and another part was also to uphold the family honor and prestige. This finding mirrors the conclusions of research conducted by Varghese & Rae Jenkins (2009) and Dasgupta (1998), who related that Asian Indian parents had different expectations of the female child compared to the male child in adhering to cultural values. In the next section, I will discuss the role of family honor in the Asian Indian American traditional family interactions

THEME 5: PERCEPTIONS OF FAMILY HONOR

Among Asian Indian Americans, family honor is foundational as most parental decisions are deeply rooted in protecting and enhancing the honor and prestige of the family (citation). Activities that dishonor the family are strongly discouraged. Children are taught from a young age to care about "what the aunties think." Of the eight participants in this study, six reported family honor to be at the forefront of nearly every action and decision regarding their future. One participant conveyed that she had never heard of family honor until she entered the university, and one relayed that her parents

did not subscribe to the family honor doctrine but her grandparents, who lived with the family, believed more in activities and grades that hold up the family name.

Kira had never heard of family honor being an integral part of Asian Indian American students' lives before she came to the university. Only after she started in her academic career at the university did she "[realize] that people still [believed in family honor]." Further, Kira was dismissive of the whole notion of family honor being tied to a student's academic performance as being superficial. She suggested "it would suck for my parents if I murdered someone [or] I came out as a lesbian," but she could not understand how many students at the university revealed that family honor was important to their parents and the parents equated it with the grades students made on campus.

For Gia, family honor played a more important role in her parents' expectation of good citizenship rather than academics. They expected her to represent the family in a manner that would uphold the family name in the community. Gia reported that her grandparents, who were two generations removed from her, were more subscribed to the concept. Since she grew up in a joint family, where her grandparents lived in the same house, for them "it's more of an academics equals…family honor than it is for my parents." Gia speculated that her parents were different from other Asian Indian parents because they were more pragmatic than idealist. She shared that her parents had a broader view of success than perfect grades. Gia compared her academic performance and her brother's academic performance in high school as part of the basis of her parents' beliefs. Gia always "got good grades" and then her brother "came along and [he did not

do so well]. But then [my parents] found that he was a really good writer…They realize grades aren't everything - you can have other talents and other skills and strengths that are just as important." Further, she added that her parents felt that "communication and being able to interact with other people respectfully, politely that's important as well. Grades aren't everything."

With the exception of Gia and Kira, all other participants reported varying degrees of experiences and frustrations with the issue of family honor. Family honor permeated all aspects of the students' lives. Aishwarya spoke passionately about family honor throughout the interviews. Speaking of career choice, she reported that the "pressure is definitely there" to "be a doctor…or something," so that parents could tell people "that their kid is whatever; is studying to become whatever; or has a degree in whatever. It's more about that social pride there which kind of furthers a cycle [of conflict] in my opinion." Aishwarya found it hard to subscribe to the notion of family honor recalling that, at times, her mother, fearing what the "aunties" might think of her, even critiqued her appearance. Aishwarya related that while she attended a local Asian Indian wedding, her mother commented on Aishwarya's hair thusly: "you should do [your hair a certain way] because someone else did something…[it was all] about other people." Aishwarya found that this was "a very ridiculously way to live your life based on what other people might say or think or what they do…I really don't care what [other people] think." Such divergent thinking often created conflict in Aishwarya's household. Family honor emerged in conversations about the choice of life-mates as well. While

Aishwarya's parents searched for a groom for her sister, "there is a little bit of family honor and prestige of being able to [say] my son-in-law does this. Perception is a lot more important to my parents as to what other people will think." Aishwarya perceived that, to her parents, it was very important to maintain a clean public image for fear how friends and community members would judge the family.

Like Aishwarya, Chandrika was distressed that family honor played a big role in academic and non-academic activities. In the traditional family where she was raised, the opinion of other members of the Indian community was important. Chandrika perceived that her activities were judged through the matchmaking lens. Further, Chandrika reported that her parents worried about the time when they would search for a match for her and, at that time, what the "aunties" thought and knew about her could impact the marriage plan. Chandrika expressed: "I honestly don't care what the aunty down the street thinks," adding that she was not "going to marry someone according to [the aunties'] wishes, I am going to pick someone that [me and my parents] agree on." While Chandrika completely understood the underlying reasons behind her parents' beliefs, she labeled such thinking as "dumb," and she conveyed that her parents' "opinion mattered the most," not what "what aunties and uncles say at parties." Chandrika relayed that her parents constantly watched how her actions and those of her friends could possibly impact Chandrika's standing in the community. When a friend hacked into Chandrika's Facebook account and playfully changed her status to something that her father deemed inappropriate, Chandrika's father called, not just the friend who changed the status, but

her other friends as well to chide them. Chandrika speculated that her father's reactions arose from his concern that community members could have seen this "inappropriate" status, and would present an opportunity for community members to gossip about Chandrika. Although Chandrika understood the roots of her parents' traditional thinking as based in their own upbringing in India, she still questioned the constant dependence on validation from the community.

Likewise, Sundar grappled with the importance of family honor in every aspect of life. He disclosed that most academic and personal decisions in his life were a "public relations campaign" to uphold the family honor. He explained:

> I think family honor is more or less the reason why any choice that's made or any large decision has to either be a) initiated by my parents or b) approved by my parents. So, I have, at least in that weird twilight zone between the Indian culture and this culture, I do have some sort of leeway and that I can initiate a lot more choices than they usually would make on my behalf. But at the same time, the issue of honor is till foremost and to them [and] I still need to get their approval.

Sundar lamented that, at times, he felt that honor became more important to his parents than his personal happiness. Although he "[accepted in] some fashion because it is a genuine statement to be made," he also felt that "[the emphasis on family honor] is blown out of proportion sometimes." Regardless Sundar "[went] along with it just for my parents' sake."

Although Priyanka speculated "probably a good amount [of family honor ties into good grades]," she clarified that she "always wanted to get good grades just for myself…[my siblings] are doing decent…I don't think they let the stereotype and everything get to them either…everyone just doing it for themselves."

In summary, family honor played an important role in the lives of the majority of the students in this study. Decisions about academics, professional pursuits, and social decisions were influenced directly or indirectly by the family's desire to portray themselves and the students in the best possible light. As Sundar indicated when asked by family friends how school was going the response could not be a perfunctionary "okay." A casual question produced "an undercurrent of actual expectation that you are going to provide a positive answer and that is going to be acceptable to them, because if it's not then they will carry the conversation further trying to figure out what's going wrong." The family honor notion among Asian Indian Americans tied closely with the model minority stereotype, where everyone within and outside the community expects the students to perform well. The pressures of family honor created stress for the students and impact intergenerational communication. Parental communication towards students about grades, as in Aishwarya, Sundar, and Chandrika's case was, in part, motivated by the stress of proving to, or bragging to, people within the community about the child's academic choices and academic performance. The pressure to perform well constantly, to never reveal weaknesses to anyone including friends, to live within traditional boundaries while trying to succeed in a modern culture, to always watch over one's shoulder to see if one is living up to community expectations led to stress and intergenerational communication issues. In the next section, I will discuss what intergenerational communication issues the participants revealed during the course of the interviews.

THEME 6: PERCEPTIONS OF INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION ISSUES

The participants in this study provided rich data that enabled further understanding of communication issues between the traditional first generation parents and the more modern second generation children in this sample. The participants' revealed that the values, behaviors and expectations of the first generation parents were shaped by their struggles as immigrants, as well as by their upbringing in traditional India. Further, the participants believed that it was the parents' desire to raise their children in the same traditional environment, which existed in the midst of the more modern culture that surrounded and influenced the students. In this section, I present the sub-themes that emerged from the data. These sub-themes were 1) Strategies for communicating about grades, 2) Mistrust, conflicts, and collisions; and 3) Honesty is still the best policy.

Strategies for communicating about grades

Participants reported that their parents were very involved in the students' academic journey, some more deeply than others. Students were required to report their semester grades to their parents and to let their parents know when they stumbled on their academic paths. The participants divulged that their parents also approved of, or greatly influenced, the choice of major in college.

Priyanka, who had a 4.0 GPA, relayed that she was always open with her family about her grades. She spoke of her parents being very nurturing and wanting to help her

do her best. Priyanka conveyed: "my mom always asks me if I need to go [for help]…my uncle is a scientist and he is really good at chemistry. So, she is always asking me if I needed him to help me with Organic Chemistry." Priyanka speculated that although her parents would be unhappy if she received a bad grade, they would try to help her in all ways that they could to raise her GPA again.

Shaan's stated that his parents generally initiated the communication about his grades, with his mother being a bit more gentle and passive and his father more aggressive. While Shaan revealed that his mother would ask "about my grades, and then, how classes are going and just telling me to stay on top of things," Shaan added that he perceived his father was to be "a little more aggressive," and made his (Shaan's father's) high expectations very clear with questions such as "what happened to those two points," if Shaan brought home a grade of 98 instead of a perfect 100. Shaan conveyed that, for his parents, even an A- was a subpar grade. In college, if Shaan was struggling in a class, and he believed that he could make his grade up to an A by the end of the semester, he would not tell his parents about the problems. Shaan explained that such an action was not out of any effort to deceive, but out of a sense of worry for his parents. He would do this "just not to have them worry about it. There are so many things on their mind already."

Sundar was more apprehensive in approaching his parents with grades that were less than perfect. His parents' high expectations, combined with their reactions at something unexpected, created a situation that Sundar described thusly:

> [Talking to my parents about less than expected grades is] an issue that requires several hours of forethought and research and a lot of preparation I suppose. It's not something that I can approach my parents with lightly and expect a light response. I would definitely be gearing for a storm or preparing for battle. And in that sense, it's a little bit unhealthy, because I am already anticipating their reaction and it is putting additional stress on me in order to try and mitigate any possible negative consequences, even though I know that conflict is an inevitable in any case. It's tense, it's uneasy and I would definitely have to go into it with the expectation that I am going to come out of it very unhappy.

Although Aishwarya described her father as being supportive of her academic efforts, she reported many communication issues with her parents. Most communication about academics was "more from them to me." Aishwarya reported that she did not have much rapport with her mother. While Aishwarya conveyed that her mother just would only casually inquire about her academic status, her father was far more involved. In Aishwarya's perception, a large portion of her communication with her parents consisted of discussions about future goals. Aishwarya expressed her chagrin that most conversations about academics took place "when we are in the car and I have nowhere to escape to… it's really bad, but whenever dad is bringing me back to the campus [from home] we will talk about it." With her father, Aishwarya's "car discussions" revolved around "the future, years down the line and what and just what [I see myself] doing." At the time of the interviews, Aishwarya was in the midst of switching majors and her father would send her "articles on stuff especially because I am looking into the medical field…[to] keep up with recent developments and different aspects of that and we will have conversations about that." At first, Aishwarya's parents were not supportive about her switching majors but she succeeded in convincing them that the move was in her best

academic and professional interest. She recalled "mom and dad were a little bit concerned [with] where my grades were going right now…That was actually I think the first time that we ever really had a conversation [about] my struggles with things…It became very necessary that we talk about it so we did." Conversations about Aishwarya's academic performance created some level of conflict with her parents. She conveyed that her parents "yell about it," and she added, "I will [say] but I can't change [the past], I can only make progress…we had already yelled about this [so] going back is not going to really help."

Academic excellence was of utmost importance to the parents. This expectation was made very clear to the students at every possible opportunity. Further, the data from the interviews indicated that the parents gave more weight to academics than to co-curricular activities. If the students excelled academically, then they were given the permission to participate in co-curricular activities. With Chandrika, if her "grade started falling in [any subject] and by fall I mean getting a low B," she conveyed that her parents would place restrictions on her co-curricular activities, such as cancelling the participation in "this coming debate tournament this weekend." Chandrika reported that such an action generated "stress - because you already paid for it and you are already preparing for the tournament and then all of a sudden not be able to go or to be told that you were not going to be able to go when the tournament is like two days away," adding that such sanctions would be "troublesome." Chandrika speculated that such a distinction between academic and co-curricular was rooted in "[the way her father] grew up. [In his

time] when you study, you study and the only break you get is during the spring or summer or those vacations." While Chandrika believed that a balance existed between academics and co-curricular activities, "that concept is kind of difficult to handle [for her father]."

In similar vein Shaan speculated that his parents would ask him to limit his co-curricular activities should his academic grades start falling. He said his parents would "tell me that I need to cut back on my extracurricular a bit and spend more time studying and I haven't had that situation yet." Likewise, Aishwarya believed that although her mother supported her co-curricular activities, they "[come] second to school."

The aforementioned issues seemed to generate stress among the participants. There appeared to be a constant pressure to achieve academic excellence while conforming to traditional community norms.

In summary, academic excellence was stressed and expected by the parents. Co-curricular activities came were given a very low priority when compared to academics.

Miscommunications: Mistrust, conflicts, and collisions

Of the eight participants that I interviewed, four reported a mistrust of their parents' reactions when the students reported unmet expectations. Two participants were wary of how their parents would react to bad academic news and two did not report any negative feelings about communicating with their parents. The mistrust was not just in areas of academic communication but it spilled over into other areas as well. Of the eight participants, five reported various forms of communication issues and conflicts in their

homes. These collisions and intergenerational communication issues led to stress, despair, and a feeling of helplessness.

Aishwarya found that it was difficult for her to trust her parents' responses and reactions majority of the time because she could never predict a response. While detailing a significant communication gap between her and her parents, Aishwarya lamented "So you don't really know where that turning point is and it's really scary…When am I going to step on the landmine? But that's kind of how most things with my parents work." In addition, Aishwarya was apprehensive about approaching her parents because she "[never knew] where the tipping point [was]," although, she added, "they do try to [help]…[but] I am not comfortable [going to them] if I am struggling and so that's I guess the biggest thing." Aishwarya's hesitations were rooted in her parents being "supportive one day," and at a later time they would turn around and hold the same thing against her. She described her communication with her parents as a "slippery slope" which makes her scared to "come to them for help because even if they help you know, they will use it against you and I just feel like I am adding to their ammunition which is not fun at all." Although there was much conflict in Aishwarya's home, she claimed that there was rarely a resolution. She explained that there are "definitely places where we disagree or it will kind of turn into an argument of sorts. But we don't ever really get around to ending up somewhere, we just talk about it until we got bored." Aishwarya said that the normal end to any passionate argument came with her mother's words: "you are old enough to make your own decision." Aishwarya summed up her

frustrations as follows: “And so that sucks because I feel like I don’t have anywhere to turn. And so sometimes it’s nice to find a safe place to land every once in a while and it’s not at home.”

Like Aishwarya, Paarth explained his feelings about being home where “issues only come up when I come home.” Paarth recalled minor issues that turned into conflicts between him and his parents such as how he combed his hair or how he closed the shower curtain when he showered. Repeated conflicts, albeit minor, caused Paarth to feel that he did not “want to go home…after a while the welcome is not as great anymore. If I come for a day…I get what I need, get relax, I see my parents, see my brother, watch some TV kind of chill for a day but the more I stay, the more differences and tensions come up.” Paarth reported that his parents wanted him to be as traditional in their dealings with them as they were with their parents. Paarth felt remorse when such expectations were voiced and related that such conversations “struck hard because I realized sometimes - actually a lot of times - I do feel like I just want to be my own person.” Paarth reported that some communication issues with his parents were rooted in language issues. Paarth revealed that his mother was not fluent in English and he found it awkward to speak to his father in English. Thus he communicated with his father in Telugu, the family’s mother tongue. Besides, the language issues, Paarth was frustrated sometimes that his father did not easily let bygones be bygones and nagged about minor things by “[bringing] it back sometimes,” whereas Paarth felt “should just leave done things be, if it’s done then leave it done.”

Sundar described his apprehension about approaching his parents about any issues that he might be facing, whether academic or personal. Sundar lamented that parents, like other Asian Indian parents, tended to take any academic struggles personally viewing them as "a major failing on [his parents'] part not only just the student's part." The anticipated reaction, Sundar relayed, was anger and he described this anger:

> I think it varies definitely from individual to individual, I don't know if there is an overall Indian stance on this, but the anger is definitely a part of it, whether it is backed up by a firm, emotional, affectionate component or whether it is simply loss of control. I can say in my father's case the loss of the control is an issue. And my mother usually spends the first 5 minutes trying to calm him down so that we can actually have a proper argument so to speak.

Sundar described the expected communication between him and his parents to be "one way and positive." As part of this one-way communication, he "reports the success to [his] parents." Regarding struggles, or negative communication, Sundar conveyed that "[if] it it's something that the parent is understood not to approve of it's considered aberrant and it's just not supposed to happen and when it does…that's when communication breaks down wholly…[there are] issues of trust or understanding and that's where the two cultures collide pretty violently." Sundar described the struggle to merge two different cultures – the natal culture in the house and the dominant culture outside - conveying that the students in his generation had a "wobbly sense of culture, because we have grown up with two parts that don't mesh very well." A compromise "between those two [cultures] is often very, very difficult," and, Sundar added, "parents definitely don't help because they still want me to grow up completely within that [Indian] culture because they view it as superior."

Chandrika also spoke of many collisions related to academics and cultural values. While Chandrika struggled with inter-generational communication issues all through high school, in college, she felt she had to modify her communication strategy when such collisions occurred. While she never questioned her parents in high school, she reported that she started asserting herself more in a manner that would not be disrespectful to her parents. She likened her communication and conflict with her parents to pushing a large rock, which she claimed was, and still is, "exhausting." Chandrika described that any conversation about disagreements went in a circular manner with her father "just say[ing] whatever he just repeated." While this process was discouraging for Chandrika, she felt that the only way to break down communication barriers was to keep trying, adding that trying to convince her father to look at her point of view was "like that block that won't move until you try at it for an hour." Although Chandrika felt stress from the aforementioned communication issues, she was equally concerned about her parents. She worried that "the stress that builds up for both me and my parents. I am worried about them too, they shouldn't have to deal with that everyday." Chandrika felt that her parents expected perfection, partly because they judged themselves from her success, like other Asian Indian parents as was explained by Sundar earlier. Chandrika perceived that such expectations arose because her mother, instead of working outside the home "decided instead she would make me her lifetime project. And it's, oh gosh so much pressure!" Chandrika expressed her frustrations at the expectations for perfection: "I am not a Science experiment…I am not a specimen, my life doesn't have to be perfect…I just

want to be happy and sometimes those things don't correlate to each other. I am not a doll." Chandrika related acculturative stress due to the lack of integration of two cultures. Some activities were "something that Americans do" and unacceptable in traditional Indian culture. Chandrika was frustrated that while she explored the dominant culture that she was surrounded by, her parents assumed that she was trying to run away from her own cultural roots or that she did not value being an Indian. She lamented, "it takes that whole brick and moving the stone and seeing how far it will nudge over, just constantly doing that I feel like is exhausting."

Shaan described conflicts related to his professional goals in life, as his goals did not align with what a high-achieving Indian parent would want out of their child. Shaan revealed that he wanted to be a high school teacher but his parents actively discouraged it, partly due to the low wages of teachers and partly due to community influence. Shaan said, "[As] I get closer to having to make that decision about what I'm doing professionally, it's becomes more apparent that difference becomes more apparent and more explicit." Shaan's vocalization of his desire to explore the Teach For America program became a source of conflict. Shaan felt that he wanted to explore all his options and disagreed that "a 30000 or 40,000 salary a year" should "stop [him] from having that experience."

Kira, Priyanka, and Gia reported no collisions on any subject matter with their parents. They informed me that their relationship with their parents was very calm, open, and things were always open for discussion. Gia captured the essence of the reasons for

this openness as an understanding that if the child felt they had no options other than to cut off "communication with their parents… where they just kind of left, where they got to the point where they can't handle it anymore…on the flipside they have seen when you don't pressure your child. You let them do what they want they can become really successful.

Honesty is the best policy

Despite the communication conflicts with parents and perceived pushback from parents for five of the eight participants, all the participants believed that honesty was the best policy in communicating with parents. The honorable desire came not from any fear or apprehension, but from a genuine belief that the ultimate goal of the parents was to help the student as well as a conviction that the parents would always step up to help the children when needed. Chandrika reported that her father "values honesty above all." Since she lived "[away from home] and he doesn't know what's going on," Chandrika tried to "keep [her life] as transparent as possible." Further, Chandrika felt "if you don't find those opportunities to like push the stone a little bit more then it's never going to move, like it's always going to stay in the same spot." She explained further:

> Because if you don't, then nothing is going to change and they are going to assume that you are fine with everything they are saying, even if you have disagreements. Like my friends from back home…they will complain to me and then when the parents come into the picture they will be the perfect child that I am just like that's not going to fix your problem. And then they are the most stressed later on and [I tell them] don't do that.

Sundar reiterated the need to be honest with his parents regardless of the consequences, saying he has "come to recognize the value of parents in the educational

process, and pledged to communicate with them more often about my grades, progress in school and labs." Likewise, Kira and Gia upheld the need to be honest with parents as the parents were looked upon as resources rather than adversaries. Aishwarya stated simply that if there was a problem with her academics then "I will tell them because there is not point in crying about that kind of stuff."

In summary, a majority of the sample reported significant intergenerational communication issues, mostly stemming from the pressure to be perfect. Cultural conflicts, academic, and professional expectations were significant factors in the communication issues. It was clear from the analysis that the participants perceived that their parents were very involved in their child's academic, social, and personal lives, even through college. Academic excellence was stressed over any form of co-curricular or social activities. Intergenerational communication issues were also caused by the pull of two dichotomous cultures, the traditional one in the home and the more modern, dominant culture on the outside. However, through all these issues, there still came through a sense of caring and reverence for the parents. High academic and socio-cultural expectations of parents, the ever-present pressure to uphold the family honor, the pressure to live a traditional life in a modern culture were stressors, which further impacted intergenerational communication. In the next section, I will explore the emergent themes related to stress.

THEME 7: COPING STRATEGIES

I explored the themes of stress resulting from intergenerational relations and an analysis of the data revealed that stress was a very real element in the students‘ lives. Paarth labeled stress as his “distant companion.” Other participants described situations where they experienced mild to severely stress, as a direct result of intergenerational issues. In this section, I will detail the coping mechanisms that the students in the current study employed to alleviate their stress. During the discussion of coping strategies, the conversation naturally moved towards campus counseling services. I explored the reasons behind the under-utilization of university counseling services by this population.

Literature suggests that counseling is considered taboo among Asian Indian American students and adults alike (see for example Das & Kemp, 1997; Khanna et al., 2009; Ly, 2008; Sodowsky & Carey, 1988; Yoo et al., 2010). Several participants expressed this sentiment during the interviews and Sundar confirmed what is stated in the literature:

> [My parents] don’t distinguish between personal stress and academic stress or any of those other things that may cause me to seek [counseling] services. So if there is anything wrong like that it should never be broadcast. And however the family or the community wants to deal with it is varied in the response, but the first step is that nobody else should know about it.

Besides the taboo which accompanies seeking counseling, Sundar stated that there was an expectation, albeit unspoken, that Asian Indian Americans or Asian Americans in general are not supposed to have mental problems or stress-related issues. Such an

expectation came from the family, the community, and also from the institution. Sundar explained:

> There is definitely an expectation that students in the "Model Minority" or Asian Americans within that subset are not expected to have problems like this. And if we do that we are not ever supposed to advertise it or develop it or show it at all to anybody else, because admitting that would be a sign of weakness - that's just unacceptable.

It was Sundar's perception that false assumptions about Asian Indian Americans also permeated onto the campus. Despite feeling a need to use counseling, Sundar said he has not used the services because "there is that same public view, I guess, that they wouldn't be able to know or understand how my parents think or how they will respond or why it's such a big issue for me even if the issue may seem minor to them in contrast." Sundar reported, like all the other participants, that he relied on his peers, among others, when he felt varying levels of stress from dealing with his issues at the university and with his parents:

> I definitely lean on my peers and my friends much more heavily than my parents. There are also some other figures I guess in my personal life, who form surrogate parents. These are generally people about the same age as my parents and maybe even family friends of my parents, but are much more, I guess progressive or liberal would be the term to use here, in their views and they are more willing to discuss other options to try and resolve the issue rather than just the general response my parents would give - just try harder, work harder, do better.

When reaching out to peers in time of academic or intergenerational stress, Sundar revealed that about half the time was spent in commiseration and the other half in trying to resolve issues. With a similar sentiment, Aishwarya speculated that counseling services at the university may not be aware of the cultural pressures faced by the Asian

Indian American population. She informed me that the "stigma behind [seeking counseling help] is such that very few, I would see very few Indian students using the services." In addition, she was skeptical whether counseling services would be "very well informed as to cultural pressures and the influence that [culture] has [on our lives], which is why it makes it harder to go talk to [counseling services]." Like Sundar, Aishwarya used her friends as her informal support group. She also relied on dancing and watching movies. Interestingly, Aishwarya reported a more curious activity to help her deal with the stress - she made lists of things to do. However, for the most part, she said she had "programmed [herself] to not pay attention to [the stress]."

Chandrika had the chance to use the university counseling services after a period of severe intergenerational stress. During the interview, she relayed her interactions with the counselors to me. In her brief interaction, Chandrika perceived that the counselor she communicated with "couldn't understand where I was coming from because I could tell that I was talking to a white girl…she didn't really connect to me at any level." Regarding the counselor's understanding of her parents' viewpoint, Chandrika relayed that the counselor "definitely thought my dad was crazy…I feel like if I had talked to an Indian person then they would understand the whole [situation]," adding that an Indian counselor would "have been able to guide me better…[counseling center] needs to hire some Indian people and Asian people." Defending her cultural background and her parents when the counselor told her that Chandrika should just ask her father to stop interfering in her life, she conveyed:

> I am not going to tell my parents, who have done so much for me and sacrificed so much for coming to this country. I am not going to tell them to stop interfering in my life because I am the only child…I am the only thing they have right now.

Chandrika leaned on her friends on campus to cope with her stress. Chandrika reported that being with her friends helped her far more than seeking professional help whether on or off campus.

Paarth described stress as his "distant companion." While Paarth said the stress was "ever-present" in his life, he speculated that he may never use counseling services because he was a very private person. He suggested that it would be beneficial for counseling services to understand the context of the unique challenges of the Asian Indian American population. He stated: "obviously there is a difference [between] the needs of an Asian Indian and a normal high achieving student" and he hoped that the university recognized these differences. Paarth had a more philosophical view on dealing with stress. He noted that no one time is perfect, and he just took things as they "come and go."

Although Gia had heard of university counseling services, she said she never felt the need to use them. That is not to suggest that she did not feel stress; she just had different mechanisms for coping with stress. Her solution was talking with parents, family, and close friends. She just talked to her parents and "to family members, friends and just got positive…I have some close friends [thus] an informal support group." Kira and Priyanka reported similar mechanisms for coping with stress.

Co-curricular activities were the informal support group for Shaan. When he felt stressed he used a pragmatic approach to remind him self that "it was just one grade." He did not ever consider using the counseling services, as he had no time in his day to attend a one-hour appointment. He felt that perhaps 15-minute walk-in appointments would be more helpful for busy students like him. In addition, Shaan described his hesitation thusly: "I am just not aware of how many services they have for things like parental pressure which I feel is…a little more prevalent in South Asians."

Aishwarya conveyed that her parents did not want her to share any family issues even with her close friends. Her parents conveyed the "impression that if you share your problems with someone [then] their perception of you is not super squeaky-clean and I [say] but it doesn't need to be, they are there to help you get through it. [I ask my parents] what do you expect me to do and [my mother says] 'deal with it' and that gets really difficult."

In summary, all the students in the current study felt different levels of stress from their interactions with their parents. The participants expressed some degree of skepticism about the ability of university counseling services to understand the unique problems faced by the Asian Indian American population.

THEME 8: STUDENT EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

As the interviews drew to a close, the participants spoke of their desires regarding parental expectations and intergenerational interactions. The significant finding from this data was that the participants would like the parents to just listen to them and have some

empathy for them. While the participants understood that their parents' desires for them were based on the parents' own struggles as immigrants; they wanted the freedom to explore and shape their own lives.

Aishwarya had a very simple message to the parents: "listen to your kids." She wished her parents had given her the ability to open up with them but she said that such an idea did not exist in her household. Shaan reiterated the same message that parents needed to listen to their children in a genuine manner. Shaan wanted this listening to be genuine where parents "listen to what [the children] really want to do and be genuinely and sincerely open because you can say you listen and then shoot down what [the children] say and that's not really listening." Shaan stressed the importance of this sincere effort and said parents should "listen to what your student has to [say], what your kid wants, listen to his interest, listen to his passions…give that really an open ear because if you don't that's just going to push the kid away and they are going to keep things from you and even if their decision is in line with your own." While Shaan agreed "grades are very important," adding that "it's good to emphasize good grades," he felt that "the amount of pressure shouldn't be disproportionate and there are other things in life and there shouldn't be as much of a stress on perfect grades."

In the same tone as Shaan, Chandrika indicated that parents just needed to listen to the desires and wishes of the child. Chandrika wanted to make her own mistakes and find her own path, and her own successes in life. Chandrika pleaded, "let me make mistakes - I will learn from them and if I don't then it's still my life. I will be happy

someway or the other. And I think [that is] the whole misunderstanding with what happiness is and what success is." Chandrika also worried about her parents' health. She was concerned that if they stressed about every small thing then they would ruin their own health and she wanted them to "be there for the big events in your life like graduating from college and getting married and your first job."

Paarth gave an impassioned parting remark where he said sometimes his misunderstandings with his parents felt like "death by a thousand cuts." Paarth felt that parents must show more empathy towards the children, and understanding about why the children did not want to follow what the parents wanted of them. He felt "more empathy [and] understanding is the only way that [intergenerational communication issues] can be solved [or] helped in anyway." Stating that his home environment was not fun at all, Paarth divulged "we don't ever hug or anything in my [home]…of course there is affection in different ways, but I feel like understanding and empathy are really maybe a bit lacking especially across generationally because I am very different person from my parents." Just like Shaan and Chandrika, Paarth also felt that truly listening to the child was critical. Paarth wasn't sure "how much they know…that I am different from them, but at least realizing that whatever they think is not always the right thing…realizing that whatever you say can be wrong and kind of looking at other side of things [is important]. So empathy understanding that's really what [Asian Indian American second-generation are looking for." Further, Paarth derided the mechanistic path Asian Indian American

parents expected their child to take. Reminding parents that the child, far from being robotic was a thriving human, Paarth expressed his feelings thusly:

> Your child is not a little machine [that] goes through college and gets a job and gets married…you know it's a not a little machine…on this little stage I'm in college, this little stage I am working, this little stage I am married. And maybe a bit more willingness to see…from other person's view point and I think that will go a long way towards kind of helping [communications].

Likewise, Sundar hoped that parents would initiate communication, thus opening up avenues for improved intergenerational relationships. Sundar stressed that "communication has to be key," adding that if the "upper generation can open up and initiate communication" it would make it "much, much easier" for the students to then "reciprocate and respond." Such a strategy, Sundar believed, would be the key for a family that is "much stronger and much happier."

Unlike the other participants, Gia and Priyanka felt that the student should initiate the communication and "if [the student was] feeling stressed or pressure just talk about it." In Indian families, Gia said there was a tendency to "stay quiet about things," particularly things that families were "uncomfortable with…if you don't know like what direction to go to…or [negative things]," adding that, "communicating is important." Like Gia, Priyanka also stated that being open with parents is the best policy for students.

In summary, a majority of the students wanted more open communication with parents, an ability to explore their own futures rather than going through a scripted life, and less pressure.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the data answered the three research questions. As a reminder for the reader, the research questions were:

1. How do undergraduate second-generation Asian Indian American students at an elite, selective public university in the Southern United States describe their interactions with their parents with regards to their academic performance and academic choices?
2. What stressors, if any, do second-generation Asian Indian American students identify when interacting with their parents?
3. What strategies do these students use to alleviate the mental stress, if any, from their communication with their parents about their academic performance and choices?

In order to understand the parental interactions of the students in the current study with their parents, it was important to what the students chose to share with their parents. Since this was a study that was based on student perceptions, it was equally important to understand how students perceived their parents reactions to the students' academic choices such as choice of major. The data revealed student perceptions of parent responses to issues of academic performance such as grades. Further, the students revealed their perceptions about parental expectations of both professional and academic success. Student perceptions of parental mandates on traditional Asian Indian expectations such as dating were also a factor in communicating with the parents.

While communicating with parents the participants defined various stressors: family honor, the model minority myth, perceived reactions to lowered expectations, mistrust, and cultural collisions. While describing coping strategies, the participants described self-segregated informal support groups. They also described limited use of counseling services on campus primarily due to the stigma associated with counseling in the Asian Indian American population. Figure 3 shows a schematic of the themes as they relate to the research questions.

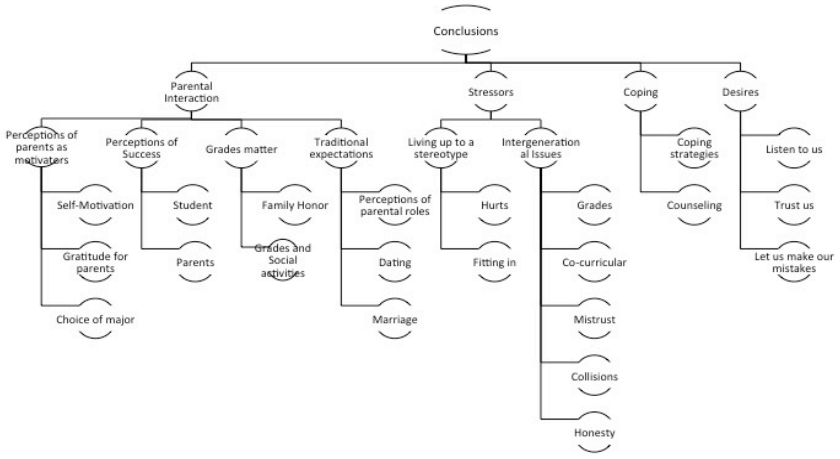

Figure 3: Themes as they related to the research questions

In Chapter Five, I will discuss the summary of the findings, the theoretical implications, recommendations for further research, and implications for the community.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It can go on and on, or someone must write "The End" to it. I have concluded that only I can do that. And if I can, I must. – Gerald R. Ford.

Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the key findings of the study as they relate to each research question. In this chapter I will present the following in the order listed 1) Overview of the study, 2) Presentation of the findings, 3) Reflections on the theoretical framework, 4) Implications for the Asian Indian community and students, 5) Implications for practice, and 6) Recommendations for future research.

A 2012 Pew Center report on Asian Americans listed this multi-ethnic group as the fastest growing immigrant population. Asian Americans have now surpassed Hispanics as the largest minority group entering the United States ("The Rise of Asian Americans," 2012). Asian Indian Americans are a critical group in the United States – they are the 3rd largest among Asian Americans, the most educated among Asian Americans, and have the highest median income among Asian Americans. They are also making gains in the political arena, such as Governor Bobby Jindal of Louisiana and Governor Nikki Haley of South Carolina. Further, this report indicates that 70% of Asian Indians have a bachelor's degree compared to 49% of all Asian Americans and 28% of all Americans. A significant finding listed in this report, and related to the current study, is that 78% of Asian Indian Americans state that good parenting is of foremost importance to them. Of all Asian American groups, Asian Indian Americans placed the

most emphasis on parenting. These statistics about Asian Americans make a compelling case to study the Asian Indian American population.

Overview of study

This study, using a phenomenological research design, gathered the perceptions of undergraduate Asian Indian American students at an elite public university in the Southwestern United States about their communication with their parents regarding their academic choices, academic performance, professional goals, and related intergenerational issues. This study was unique as aimed to understand the parent-child interactions in this population through the singular lens of the student. Using the narratives of the participants, I addressed the following research questions:

1. How do undergraduate second-generation Asian Indian American students at an elite, selective public university in the Southern United States describe their interactions with their parents with regards to their academic performance and academic choices?
2. What stressors, if any, do second-generation Asian Indian American students identify when interacting with their parents?
3. What strategies do these students use to alleviate the mental stress, if any, from their communication with their parents about their academic performance and choices?

The sample of this study consisted of five female and three male students, of which six were sophomores and two were juniors. Six of the eight students were

pursuing degrees in the STEM area; one was in Liberal Arts, and one in Business. The study employed the use of two semi-structured, in-depth interviews with each participant. These interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The data from the transcripts were organized into themes. The emergent themes were subsequently gathered into overarching themes that were presented in chapter four and will be summarized in the next section. In the next section, I present a summary of the key findings of the study as they relate to each research question.

Conclusions

In this section I will present the summary of findings as they relate to the research questions. The findings will show that Asian Indian American parent-child relationships are non-linear, multi-dimensional and complex. The summaries will also refer back to some of the existing research cited in the literature review in chapter two.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS RELATED TO RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

With research question one I wanted to understand how Asian Indian American undergraduate students define their interactions with their parents regarding academic performance and academic choices. In understanding "interactions," it was my aim to explore and report on how the students approach the parents on academic issues. As well, I captured the participant perceptions of parental responses. The participants perceived the interaction with their parents to be hierarchical – from parent to child – and leaning towards a conformity pattern of communication orientation. Yet, this interaction was not perceived as entirely negative by the participants. On a continuum scale with

negative being the most restricted communication and positive being the most open communication, the participants' perceptions seemed to fall somewhere in the middle leaning more towards positive.

The participants perceived that their parents were very involved in the academic choices of their children. The perceptions of the students were that the parents were pro-active about the academic progress that the students were making and parents enforced the expectation of high grades both through encouragement and admonishment while expecting nothing short of academic excellence from the student. Based on what was reported by the participants, I concluded that these high expectations were expressed through conversations starting very early in the child's education – in elementary and pre-elementary education enforcing their expectations all the way through college. This conclusion aligned with prior research about high expectations of Asian Indian and Asian American parents (Khanna et al., 2009).

A significant conclusion of this study was the transmission of motivation from the home to the college. All of the participants reported that their parents motivated them to succeed right from elementary school and this motivation became an intrinsic part of the participant. The students were immersed in the high-achieving culture in the home. This motivation transferred with them across to college. Based on the perceptions of the students, it appeared that parents, whether through praise, penalty, or through other motivational means, inculcated into the student a desire to do well and excel at every endeavor. This drive for excellence was not limited to academics; rather it spilled over into co-curricular activities as well. Therefore, the students' motivation for succeeding in college was not necessarily fear of parental punishment or fear of failure, but, in the current sample, it always came from a more positive side, which was their own ambition

to succeed. While perceived parent reactions and expectations were a consideration, the major reasons for academic achievement came from within the students. Academic and professional success was important to the participants in this study so that they could achieve happiness, satisfaction, social and economic stability. This conclusion supported previous research by Felter (2008), who concluded that second-generation Asian Indian Americans overwhelmingly cited the self as a goal motivation. This finding also contradicted prior research that suggested students do well for fear of failure or fear of parental consequences (Eaton & Dembo, 1997).

An important conclusion of this study concerning major choice was the three most important reasons that students perceived were the basis for parents to guide them toward certain majors: pragmatism, long-term earning potential, and professional stability. Although prestige and family honor played a role in the choice of major, a greater component was practicality. The perception of the students was that parents drew on their own struggles as new immigrants to the United States to guide the students toward paths that guaranteed a stable professional life. Besides professional stability, the students perceived that parents also guided them professions that parents felt would be acceptable in the community circles. This conclusion contradicted prior research which found that major choice was based more in prestige and family honor (Dundes et al., 2009). It is worthy to note that the study conducted by Dundes et. al. (2009) focused on Asian Americans as a whole; it was not targeted toward Asian Indian Americans. The conclusions from the current study align with Chakrabarti's (2008) research which used a sample of Asian Indian American school students and concluded that an important reason for major choice was stability. Chakrabarti's scholarship was focused on school students and their parents. Therefore the unique nature of the current study was the focus on

undergraduate sophomores and juniors in college and gaining their perspective on this phenomenon from the lens of the student alone.

An additional, unexpected conclusion of this study was a unique theme of thankfulness and gratitude toward parents that emerged about academics, academic achievement, and parental pressure. The students perceived that parents exerted immense pressure to succeed on their children through their grade school years. Sometimes, the students felt, the pressure was "unreasonable" and "exhausting." Nevertheless, students expressed a sense of gratitude for their parents. The students reported the high expectations as the key reason behind admission to an elite university and a chance at a successful future. This same pressure enabled the students to thrive academically in college as well. Any hurdles in college were handled with the lessons learned through the grade school years. This gratefulness was a new finding of this study that was not evident in any literature reviewed. Prior research (Felter, 2008; Keshishian et al., 2010; Sue & Okazaki, 1990) details the pressures parents exert on students to succeed; nonetheless this finding of gratitude is unique.

From the participants' perspectives, students and parents differed in their definitions of success. For the students, success was finding happiness; participants reported that, for parents, success was about stability, keeping up excellent grades, and settling into a high paying, professional occupation. Participants also reported the following: 1) All parents viewed success as financial and personal stability; students viewed success as exploration and doing what they wanted to do; 2) Parents drew on their own experiences as new immigrants and the compromises they had to make in order to enter and succeed in high paying professional jobs outside of their natal culture; 3) The participants grew up in stable homes in upper middle class neighborhoods and

transitioned from high school to the colleges of their choice; 4) Their struggles were very different from the ones endured by their parents. Overall, participants noted that they viewed success through a different lens than their parents. Like their perceptions of their parents' views, most of the students (all but one) believed that professional success was inherently tied to academic success. This finding aligned with Chakrabarti (2008), although Chakrabarti's sample consisted of school children and their parents. The students in this study were sophomore and juniors in college who were well on their way to graduate school, professional school, or professional careers.

From the participants' narratives, I concluded that the he participants wanted to explore their own futures and live a life without regret. The student's perceived that parents wanted them to have financial prosperity while working in stable careers even if the profession was not of the student's own choosing. Thus, based on student perceptions alone, I concluded that the final aim of the students and parents' wish for students was the same: to live a life without regrets. Most of the participants appeared to differ from what they perceived to be their parents' definition of this perfect life. These seemingly different expectations created communication challenges for students. The students identified several stressors when they attempted to negotiate cultural boundaries and the perceived academic expectations of parents, which are discussed in the next section.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS RELATED TO RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

With research question two, I aimed to understand what Asian Indian Americans identified as stressors while communicating with their parents about their academic performance and choices. The students felt a pressure to live up to their parental and community expectations. This pressure was reinforced by the model minority stereotype

that surrounded the Asian Indian American students and families. Participants indicated that there was an expectation from parents, from the Asian Indian American community, and non-Asian community that Asian Indian American students would achieve academic excellence. In light of this prevailing stereotype, I examined research question two from a multifaceted viewpoint. To accomplish this, I analyzed the data not just for pressure related to academics but also examined the data that defined stressors related to model minority and cultural issues as they applied to academics.

The participants critiqued the model minority stereotype, describing it as "unrealistic" and "too much pressure." They blamed the stereotype was for creating a "grade-grubbing mentality" and, what Chandrika called, "GPA whores." Contrary to being an honor, the model minority myth generated stress as it created pressure on these students to perform better than others. It resulted in a misrepresentation of the entire Asian Indian American population and did not account for within-group differences. A nuanced finding was that two participants perceived the model minority stereotype to be an honor as it set them apart from their peers. The findings that the model minority stereotype generated stress for the majority of this sample aligned with prior research conducted by Baptiste (2006), Saran (2007), and Lee et. al. (2009).

Students identified various facets of intergenerational communication as stressors. These were cultural collisions, conflict about co-curricular activities, and communication about grades. One surprising conclusion of this study, which seemed to go counter, and yet parallel, to the gratitude finding in the previous section, was a feeling of mistrust. Half the sample in the current study reported that they felt a mistrust of their parents and were apprehensive when they shared information with their parents. Participants expressed that parents' reactions could not be trusted, and information that was shared

today could possibly be used against the students at unexpected spots during future conversations. The study concluded that students experienced varying levels of stress communicating their grades to their parents. The high academic expectations of parents gave the students the perception that an A- was also an unacceptable grade to the parents. In spite of this stress, students did recognize the value of including parents in the conversation about academic progress. The communication patterns defined by the students fit in to the framework of Conformity Orientation as described by Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2002). As well, these findings aligned with prior research about Asian American students having general communicative issues with parents (Khurana, 2008; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Tewari, 2002)..

This study found that mothers play a greater role in serving as the vessel to pass cultural values down to the children. While fathers were more involved in the academics of the student, mothers were more involved in developing cultural values in the child. These cultural values were passed down in the form of ensuring student involvement in cultural activities such as traditional Indian singing and dancing, language immersion, and religious rituals. These findings confirm prior research that concludes the role of women being the cultural vessels in the Asian Indian American family (Dasgupta, 1998; Farver et al., 2002; Gupta, 1997). There was a gender component in the finding discussed above. From the narratives of the students, I concluded that such cultural activities were stressed more for the female child than the male child in the house. Cultural values were passed down to male students, as well, but in more of a passive conversational format rather than an active format such as were with female students.

There was an expectation from the parents that the students would uphold the family honor, both through their public behaviors as well as through their academic and

professional accomplishments. Pleasing the "aunties" was very important to the parents and less important to the participants, thus generating intergenerational issues. Due to these communication barriers, participants withheld certain communication from their parents. These findings aligned with prior research about communication, intergenerational relationships, and family honor (Chandras et al., 1999; Ly, 2008; Saran, 2007). Despite the aforementioned communicative stress, the study concluded that, when communicating about academic performance, students felt that honesty was the best policy. Regardless of the outcome, the students communicated honestly with their parents about any academic struggles encountered at the school or college. Chandrika named this honesty "pushing the stone." At times the findings were contradictory but these contradictions served to show the struggles in the minds of the participants. Although they felt apprehensive about communicating "negative" information the participants also realized the value of including parents in the conversation about their struggles. This was a unique finding of this study and warrants further investigation in future research.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS RELATED TO RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

The aforementioned stressors impacted the students and created stress for them. The stress was very real for the participants in the study. Five of the eight participants had experienced moderate to severe levels of stress related to intergenerational interactions, with one participant suffering a nervous breakdown. This stress was related to the pressure created by intergenerational issues and the pressure to be perfect. A significant, finding of this study was the underutilization of counseling by the Asian Indian American students. Students perceived that there was a stigma or taboo placed on

counseling by parents and the Asian Indian American community in general. The participants in this believed that, for Asian Indian American students, it was unacceptable to speak to strangers about any family or academic problems. It was the perception of the students that the families wished to be viewed as harmonious and stable. Asian Indian American families are more stable compared to other minorities as the 2012 Pew Center report suggests. According to the report 92% of Asian Indian American children lived in families with both parents. In addition, the report concluded that only 12% of Asian Indian American children will marry outside their race suggesting that the children were very rooted in tradition and exhibited traditional behaviors. The conclusions of this study are consistent with those published in the Pew Center report.

The participants in the current study perceived that counseling centers on campus may not be aware of the cultural attributes of Asian Indian American students, and their obligatory duties to their parents. Of the eight participants, only one had experienced the counseling centers directly; all others based their perceptions on a hunch. Since cultural considerations dominated the lives of these students and they were surrounded by a traditional family set up and perceived parental directives. These students perceived that counseling services, on or off campus, were not an available option. The students dd not dismiss counseling services entirely; they were merely wary of using such services due to the societal stigma attached to counseling in the Asian Indian American community. These findings confirm prior research about the attitude of Asian American and Asian Indian American attitudes toward counseling (Chandras et al., 1999; Das & Kemp, 1997; Khanna et al., 2009; Tewari, 2002; Yoo et al., 2010).

The primary coping strategy that Asian Indian American students in the current study employed was “hanging out” with friends. They formed informal support groups

with other Asian Indian American friends. Rather than turn to family or professional services, these students either kept their feelings to themselves or shared with their closest friends. They participated in sports and engaged in their hobbies as a way to relieve stress. One student reported that she resorted to Indian dance when she was severely stressed. Students self-segregated into groups with other Asian Indian American students. As well, they became members of Asian Indian American student organizations, as they perceived such organizations to be a better fit for themselves than organizations with non-Indian members.

In summary, intergenerational interaction, as described by Asian Indian American college students, was a complex tale of angst and gratitude existing side by side. The students perceived that the roots of their parents' Authoritarian parenting style was based in the parents' own experiences as they grew up in traditional India. Additionally, according to the perceptions of the students, it was the parents' own immigrant experiences influenced how they chose to parent their children. Based on the narratives of the students, I concluded that the parents as were strict but excellent motivators. Although the descriptions of intergenerational communication by a majority of the students interviewed relayed conflict; nevertheless the final feeling was positivity rather than negativity. The students described that their parents expected them to carry on the traditional Indian values that the parents infused into the students. Despite the perceived control, the expectations, and sometimes the perceived anger on part of the parents, these children were happy; they were stable, and they were confident. While the participants in this study were conflicted about high parental expectations; yet they acknowledged that the perceived parental desires were aimed the ultimate success of the student. The students in this study expressed a desire for their parents to listen to them; they wanted to

explore and chart the course of their own lives; and they did not want their lives to be scripted by parents. In this regard, their interactions and expectations did not appear any different from any other college student. These conclusions broke apart the reported exceptionalism of this population. In actuality, Asian Indian American students had common adolescent concerns about parental interactions. Therefore, rather than viewing this population as exceptional and unique, it would be helpful to look at them as just average students who are struggling to reconcile a cultural world that is inside the home and a more open world outside the home. The unique pressures on this population were those of family honor and of the model minority myth. These students had found coping strategies to deal with the stress. They used each other for support but there was limited use of counseling services due to the perceived stigma on counseling. These conclusions have implications for the community, for the research community and for practitioners on campus. In the following sections, I will revisit the theoretical framework and detail the aforementioned implications.

Reflections on the theoretical framework

BAUMRIND'S PARENTING THEORIES AND CONFORMITY ORIENTATION

Baumrind's Parenting Theory is the one of the theories used to situate and describe intergenerational relations in this study. Baumrind proposed three parenting styles – Authoritative, Authoritarian and Permissive. A detailed discussion of Baumrind's theories has been included in the definition of the theoretical framework in Chapter Two. Baumrind proposed that Authoritative parenting led to children who were self–reliant, explorative, and content, whereas Authoritarian parenting led to children who were discontent, withdrawn and distrustful (Baumrind, 1971). The parents, as

described and perceived by the participants, met all the characteristics of Authoritarian parents practicing conformity orientation, who expected the child to adhere to an absolute standard, which was motivated by cultural, religious or spiritual norms. The children of such parents, according to Baumrind, were forced to suppress his/her own wishes in deference to family happiness (Baumrind, 1971). A surprising finding was that the students in the sample did not conform to the characteristics of the child that Baumrind described for the Authoritarian parent. To the contrary, in the current sample, the children were confident, successful, and eager to move on to successful graduations and careers. Therefore, while the parents met all the criteria of Authoritarian parents as described by Baumrind, the children closely resembled the children of what Baumrind defined as Authoritative parents. While the students did report conflict issues with their parents, they did not present as withdrawn, introverted, or under-confident.

The participants reported that the experiences of the parents were likely shaped by the early influences in their natal culture in India from where they migrated to a new culture. Based on the student perceptions of their parents, I concluded that the desire to succeed in the new culture as well to keep the children rooted in Indian cultural values resulted in the Authoritarian parenting styles. The students negotiated these parenting styles and the model minority stereotype while responding to the parenting demands. Based on the student perceptions of parenting style I concluded that the parents in the current study appeared to possess the characteristics of both Authoritarian not in the Authoritative parents leaning more toward the Authoritarian. The parental characteristics shaped the interactions between the parent and child in a significant manner. Therefore, it is imperative that Baumrind's parenting theories be revisited for the culturally sensitive parenting styles adopted by Asian Indian American parents in the United States. Further

investigation about parenting theories that take cultural considerations into account is warranted. In order to understand the interactions between Asian Indian American students and their parents, it would be helpful to replicate Baumrind's study using Asian Indian American parents as the sample.

The student perceptions revealed a parent who was likely strict, yet loving; *a* parent who expects not just success, but excellence in every endeavor from the child; and a parent who instills motivation and goals into the child's mind and continuously, even through college, leads the child to those particular goals. Again, using the student perceptions as a guide, it appears that the Asian Indian American parent feels no sense of obligation to make the child happy; rather he/she believes that it is the duty of the child to fulfill the wishes of the parents. These parent characteristics have been constructed using only student perceptions of parent qualities. The aforementioned traits form a set of hypotheses for a follow-up quantitative study to determine if a larger number of Asian Indian American parents display these qualities and thus define a culturally appropriate parent type alongside Baumrind's typology.

Implications for the Asian Indian American Students and Community

This study explored intergenerational relations between first generation immigrant parents and second-generation undergraduate students, the resultant stress on students, as well as the coping strategies employed by students. The data and conclusions from the study suggest several recommendations for the Asian Indian American community.

This study will benefit members of the Asian Indian American student body on college campuses as it will help relay the experiences of the eight participants in this study to the rest of the student body. Other Asian Indian American students can affirm

their own experiences through the experiences of these students. Further, this study will help demystify the Asian Indian American student to members of other minorities or to White students showcasing the participants as normal students with similar desires and aspirations as the average college student.

It was the students' desire that parents open communication lines with their children and encourage students to communicate openly with parents. Since students felt a stigma about visiting a counseling center, and there are perceived communication barriers between parents and students, students may feel varied levels of stress. As well, it is urgent to initiate a dialog within the Asian Indian American community about the model minority stereotype along with the impact on the students as they negotiate this stereotype. There is a soul-searching needed within the community about how parental desires and wishes are communicated to the students. The participants in this study were resentful of constantly having to please the "aunties." They wanted to learn from their own mistakes and did not want their lives to be scripted, where in one stage of life they went to school, in another they got married, and in a third they had children – thereafter they were free to explore. They wanted to explore now.

It is my hope that the findings of this study will generate a new dialog between first generation parents and their second-generation children. I also wish to clarify that the purpose of this study is not to criticize Asian Indian parents, rather to bring forth the perspectives of the children and enable members of the Asian Indian American community and the non-Asian community to understand the feelings of these students.

Implications for Practice

There are several layers of campus personnel that students will touch. Students deal with admissions counselors, academic advisors, faculty advisors, mentors, residence-hall monitors and sometimes counselors. Providing information about the Asian Indian American student body to such personnel is important as such information will assist in breaking stereotypes and dispelling misconceptions, if any. Although Asian Indian American students appear to have the same desires and aspirations as other college students, they have perceived parental and community pressures. It would be helpful for college and university personnel to recognize these pressures as they interact with the students.

Asian Indian American students appear to self-segregate in Asian Indian American student organizations and in informal support groups comprising of friends. These students have developed effective coping strategies for stress. As colleges and universities look to design programs to support these students, it would be beneficial to look at these existing groups. Institution may just have to provide meeting spaces in order to provide support to these existing informal groups.

Counseling centers are generally the last stop for a student looking for support. While counseling centers welcome all students to seek their services, they must take into account the stigma or taboo associated with counseling in the Asian Indian American population.

While the results of this study cannot be generalized beyond the sample of the study, it is appropriate to recognize that other Asian Indian American students may be reporting similar experiences. Based on the findings of this study, I present the following recommendations for practice:

1. Institutions should consider organizing outreach sessions in order to reach members of the Asian Indian American community. These sessions could be held in collaboration with Asian Indian socio-cultural and religious organizations. A major focus of these sessions would be to inform the community about the services offered by the university, the challenges faced by the students in college, and coping strategies for dealing with the challenges. Such outreach sessions would be beneficial in apprising students before they enter college about the services offered and how the students can expect to benefit from these services. For institutions that do not have the staff or budgets to conduct such sessions in person, it would behoove to set up an informative web site that can be linked from a prominent place in the institutional web site or from the student/parent portal.
2. Educational institutions may consider developing literature and brochures aimed at parents that inform them of the general challenges Asian Indian American students face in college. These brochures could list some strategies for coping as well as receiving help. Further, these parent-focused brochures could guide parents to resources that they could use to obtain information from the university as well as to get help for the students and themselves.
3. Institutions can draw on extant scholarly literature related to Asian Indian American college student to educate the personnel about the challenges, aspirations and specific needs of this student body.

Recommendations for future research

While this study was a relatively small phenomenological, qualitative study conducted on eight undergraduate students at Southern Competitive University, a tier-one

research university in the Southern United States, it may serve as a springboard for future studies.

With the exception of one student, the sample in this study belonged to middle class and upper middle class socio-economic status. An examination of an Asian Indian population from a low socio-economic status (SES) would benefit the existing body of literature on Asian Indians, to institutions, and to the larger Asian Indian American community. Such research would provide valuable information of what role SES plays in the achievement orientation of this particular ethnic group in comparison with other minorities.

While conducting the current study, I was intrigued about the prospect of interviewing first generation Asian Indian American parents in order to get their perspectives on how they perceived their children's interactions with them and what academic and cultural success meant to the parents. Research focused on parents would validate the findings of the current study.

The sample in the current study indicated that the attitudes of parents has changed slightly from high school to college. A longitudinal study that follows a selected sample of Asian Indian American students from early high school through early career would provide valuable data on how perceptions about parents change over time. As well, such a study would provide valuable information on how the perceptions of success change for Asian Indian American students and how they negotiate the model minority stereotype at different stages in their academic development.

The values of the second generation Asian Indian American participants in this study were shaped by first generation parents who immigrated to this country, struggled to settle down, and then made a successful life for themselves. As the students in the current study perceived, first-generation wanted success for their children to prevent them from struggling the way the parents worked to establish themselves. However, the second-generation children grew up in comfort without the upheaval of migratory distress of the first generation. Research on the third or even the fourth generation Asian Indian Americans would provide valuable data on whether immigrant experiences drive the pressure to be perfect or if this drive for excellence can be attributed to a race or class of people.

The theoretical framework that informed this theory was partially based on Diane Baumrind's theory of parenting styles. Baumrind's theories do not take into account the cultural considerations that impact parenting styles and parenting demands. From the conclusions of the current study, it is evident that Baumrind's parenting theories may not necessarily apply to the Asian Indian American population. .In addition this new research must compare the application of Baumrind's theories to the white population versus the Asian Indian American population and to the Asian American population in general. Such a study would compare the terms that Baumrind proposed to define parenting styles using the ethno-cultural lens. The conclusions from the current study suggest that, possibly, these terms assume different meanings in different cultural contexts. Baumrind's study should be replicated on the Asian Indian American

population to see if the same parent types are revealed in this population or if some new parent type will emerge.

Yet another area of potential in the study of Asian Indian Americans is a second generation Asian Indian American sample at the community college level along with the parents. A sample of students who found themselves at the community college by choice, by circumstance, or as a mandate from their family could help provide valuable information how community pressure and the demands of family honor cause these parents to describe their childrens' academic journey.

Finally, there is a paucity of scholarship about Asian Indian American students who have chosen to completely drop out of college or not pursue a college education contrary to their parents' expectations. During the interviews, one participant informed me that children who dropped out or failed are used as warning examples by parents to forewarn children what could happen to them if they did not aim for high academic achievement. Far from receiving any sympathy or empathy struggling Asian Indian American students appeared to be ridiculed or silenced. While there has been scholarship about the accolades that Asian Indian American students earn, there appears to be a lack of scholarship about those Asian Indian American students who prove that the model minority is but a myth.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear student:

My name is Amardeep Kahlon. I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Administration program pursuing the PhD program. My dissertation research is focused on undergraduate Asian Indian American students at Southern State University. The aim of the study is to examine student perceptions of intergenerational conflict in the areas of academic performance and academic choices. The study will explore how the members of this population communicate with their parents and what their perceptions are of their parental expectations. The study will also investigate if the students feel any stress or anxiety as a result of this intergenerational communication. If so, the study will reveal how students cope with such stress. To recruit participants in the study, I am seeking your assistance in passing the word around to the members of the Asian Indian American community on campus. The eligible participants in this study will be:

- Second generation Asian Indian Americans that is the participants were either born in the United States or must have moved here before the age of five
- Students whose parents are both of Asian Indian origin
- Currently enrolled undergraduate students at Southern State University
- Second semester sophomores, juniors or seniors

Interested and eligible student participants will be invited to participate in two in-depth semi-structured interviews. Each interview will last approximately 90 minutes and will be held at a time and location that is mutually agreeable to both the researcher and participant. Participation in the study is completely voluntary. Participants can choose not to participate or withdraw at any point in the study without any adverse consequences to their current or future relationship with Southern State University.

The interviews will be held at a date, time, and place that is mutually acceptable to both participant and the researcher. Participants will sign an informed consent form prior to the start of the interview. Each student participant will choose a pseudonym so that his or her real identity is kept confidential. All the interviews will be audio recorded. This recording, and the resulting transcriptions, will be kept only with the researcher or in a locked cabinet. Prior to the start of the interview and after signing the informed consent form, participants will be asked to answer a demographic questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information on the students' GPA, current status, and major.

This study that seeks to understand how Asian Indian American undergraduate students communicate with their parents in the narrowly focused area of academic choices and academic progress. As well, this study aims to explore the perceptions of these students about intergenerational conflict that is directly generated by the academic

choices and academic performance of the student. Students will receive no direct benefits from this study.

If you or anyone you would like to participate, please contact me via email at akahlon@utexas.edu. Please pass the information about this study along freely to undergraduate members of the Asian Indian American community. Interested students may email me to express their interest in participating in this study if they:

1. Are second generation Asian Indian American. The student must have either been born in the United States to parents who are both from India. Alternatively, the student could have moved to the United States from India before the age of 5.
2. Have both parents who were born on the Indian subcontinent and immigrated to the United States.
3. Are second semester sophomore, a junior, or senior.
4. Have resided at the university or away from home for at least one year.

I truly appreciate your assistance in recruiting participants and spreading the word about this study. Please let me know if I can answer any further questions.

In addition, if you or potential participants have any questions about their rights as a research participant, or if you have complaints, concerns, or questions about the research, please contact Southern State University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects or the Office of Research Support at (512) 471-8871. Please feel free to contact me at anytime at akahlon@utexas.edu.

Thank you for your assistance, consideration, and your time.

Amardeep Kahlon
akahlon@utexas.edu

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title: In the Midst of the Model Minority: Narratives of Second Generation Asian Indian American College Students, their Communication Patterns with their Parents, and Intergenerational Stress

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Purpose of the Study

You have been asked to participate in a research study about intergenerational relationships among undergraduate Asian Indian American students in the particular areas of academic choices and academic performance. The purpose of this study is to explore how Asian Indian American students communicate with their parents about their academic performance and the academic choices they make. The study will also examine the perceptions of students about the academic expectations of their parents, community and peers. This study will investigate if Asian Indian American students feel any form of pressure or stress from this intergenerational communication. If they do feel this stress, the study will examine the coping mechanisms employed by the students.

What will you be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in two in-depth interviews. Each interview will last about 90 minutes. The second interview will be held within 2-7 days of the first one. The interviews will be one-on-one with the researcher. No other participants will be present during the interview.

Your participation **will** be **audio** recorded and then transcribed. All transcriptions and recordings will be kept strictly confidential. If you wish, I will meet with you to review the interview transcript with you. Should you wish to review the same, you should email me at akahlon@utexas.edu. Transcripts will be reviewed at a place and time that is mutually agreeable to both participant and the researcher.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks involved in this study are no greater than the risks involved in everyday life. Since the interviews are audio-recorded there is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality.

You may experience some negative emotions when discussing certain events in your life. Should this happen, please consider contacting the following resources to mitigate the stress:

1. Southern State University Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC)
   SSB Building 5th Floor
   (512) 471-3515
   Mon – Fri 8 am – 5 pm
   http://cmhc.utexas.edu/

2. CMHC's 24-hour Telephone Counseling service at 512-471-CALL (2255)

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this study.
The possible benefits of participation to the participant are:

- A deeper understanding and exploration of inter-generational issues among Asian Indian Americans
- An introspection of intergenerational relationships
- An understanding of the role of academic choices and academic performance in the parent-child relationship

The possible indirect benefits of participation to the community are:

- A view of intergenerational relationship from the single lens of the student
- An understanding of the students' responses to academic pressures
- An understanding of the students' views of academic choices

The possible indirect benefits to the university are:

- A better understanding of the Asian Indian American population
- A look at the Asian Indian American population as something other than high-achievers
- An opportunity to examine if the university services and programs are adequately servicing the needs of this population

.

Do you have to participate?

No, your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you start the study, you may withdraw at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect your relationship with Southern State University (University) in anyway.

If you would like to participate please read this form in its entirety. If you have any questions email me at akahlon@utexas.edu or you can then contact me by phone at

512-413-7423. I will bring a printed copy of this form to the first interview where you will sign the form before we begin the interview.

Will there be any compensation?

No

What are my confidentiality or privacy protections when participating in this research study?

1. All interviews will be conducted in a quiet, private location that is mutually agreeable to both participant and researcher.
2. This study is confidential.
3. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be to be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely in a locked cabinet in the home of the researcher.
4. Recordings will be destroyed upon successful completion of the transcription.
5. A pseudonym will be assigned to you and a master key will be created that ties the pseudonym to you. This key will be stored in a locked cabinet that is different from the cabinet in which the demographic questionnaires, recordings, and transcripts are stored. This key will be shredded as soon as the data is coded and the analysis has been validated by the methodologist.
6. The data resulting from your participation may be used for future research or be made available to other researchers for research purposes not detailed within this consent form.
7. None of this data will have any identifying information that could possibly identify you as the participant.
8. None of the demographic questionnaires or interview transcripts will have identifying information that could possibly identify you as the participant.
9. This signed consent form will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home separate from all other study data. These consent forms will be maintained for a period of three years. Thereafter they will be shredded.
10. The demographic questionnaires will be stored in a locked cabinet along with the transcripts.

Whom to contact with questions about the study?

Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher, Amardeep Kahlon at 512-413-7423 or send an email to akahlon@utexas.edu. This study has been reviewed and approved by The University Institutional Review Board and the study number is 2011-12-0004.

Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Participation

If you agree to participate, please sign this form and return it to me. You may withdraw at any time from the study and your participation is completely voluntary. If you have any questions, please contact me by phone at 512-413-7423 or send an email to akahlon@utexas.edu.

Signature

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

_____
Printed Name

_____ _____
Signature Date

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, procedures, benefits, and the risks involved in this research study.

AMARDEEP KAHLON _____
Signature of Person obtaining consent Date

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Interview Protocol – 1st Interview

1. To begin with tell me about your academic and family life?
2. How would you describe your family – traditional or modern?
3. Does your family adhere strictly to traditional Indian values? If so, does this create conflict in the family between the 1st and 2nd generation? Can you describe some instances when this has happened.
4. Did you feel any pressure to choose a particular major? If so, describe how this pressure was applied and your own reactions and feelings?
5. Describe what career path this major is leading you towards.
6. How would you describe your academic progress at this point?
7. Describe what you perceive as success in life?
8. Do you believe that it is tied to success in academics?
9. Think for a minute about your friends around you. What are their experiences that they relate about their interactions with their parents regarding the academic choices they have made and about academic performance?

Interview Protocol – 2nd Interview

10. How would you describe your relationship and communication with your parents? Regarding traditional Indian values? Regarding dating? Regarding career choices? Regarding academics? Regarding your friends?
11. How do you feel when your parents discuss academic issues with you?
12. What kind of information about your grades and academics do you share with your parents?
13. Based on your observations and/ or discussions with your parents, what do you want in terms of a career or profession choice? Describe what your parents want of you and why?
14. Describe how your parents would (have already) feel/react about a decision where you chose a major/career path that was different from they had hoped you would follow?
15. What is your perception of what your parents perceive is academic and professional success. Can you give specific incidents that support your perceptions?
16. How do you fit in with the other students on campus? What do Asian Indian American students like you do to fit into mainstream culture on campus? Describe what you perceive as "mainstream."
17. Are there any stereotypes about Asian Indian American students?
18. Have you heard of the term model minority? Describe how you feel about this term and the stereotype associated with it.

19. Describe your parents' perceptions of family honor as it is tied to academic achievement?
20. Describe how your parents would feel if you received a grade that they felt was not an adequately successful course completion? If you ever received a grade that you felt would be unacceptable to your parents, how would you communicate this grade to your parents?
21. Have you, since you have entered college, felt mental stress related to your academic performance and academic choices? If so, describe how you have chosen to deal with this stress.
22. Have you, since you have entered college, felt mental stress related to your communication with your parents regarding your academic performance and academic choices? If so, describe how you have chosen to deal with this stress.
23. Have you, since you have entered college, felt that you are being treated like a member of the model minority who needs no special assistance, services, or attention? How have you dealt with this situation?

APPENDIX D: STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Please answer the following questions. Be assured that all responses will be kept confidential.

1. Are you a currently enrolled undergraduate student at Southern State University?

   _____ Yes _____No

2. What is your current level at Southern State University?

   _____ Freshman _____Sophomore

   _____ Junior _____Senior

3. In which year did you enroll at Southern State University?

   _____

4. What is your current GPA?

   _____

5. Was Southern State University your first choice of school or was this school chosen by your parents?

   _____ Mine _____Parents

6. What is your current major at Southern State University?

   _____

7. Did you choose this major yourself or was this chosen for you by your parents?

   _____ Myself _____Parents

8. Have you made a grade of C or below in a course while at the university?

   _____ Yes _____No

9. Are both your parents of Asian Indian origin?

_____ Yes _____No

10. Were you born in the United States of America or did you move here before the age of 5?

    _____ Yes _____No

11. Do you currently live with your parents?

    _____ Yes _____No

12. In which city do your parents live?

    _____

Thank you for your time in completing this demographic questionnaire.

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